

THE ARTISTIC AND ARCHITECTURAL  
PATRONAGE OF ANGELA BURDETT COUTTS

2 VOLUMES

VOLUME 1

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own:

Susan Lewis.....

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis focuses on the life and artistic patronage of the Victorian philanthropist, Angela Burdett Coutts. As the daughter of both an aristocrat and a member of the nouveau riche Burdett Coutts was a product of both the new and old world of Victorian society and this thesis seeks to explore the ways in which Burdett Coutts fashioned an identity for herself through her patronage of art and architecture. It explores the ways in which taste, gender and class are reflected in Burdett Coutts's collecting practice and examines her role as a patron through three case studies; as a collector of paintings, as a philanthropist and as a patron of architecture.

Chapter One of the thesis examines Burdett Coutts's collecting practice in relation to recent work on the cultures of collecting and the fashioning of identities with particular reference to aristocratic Victorian society. It contrasts Burdett Coutts with other notable female collectors of the period, and considers acquisition and display in relation to ideas of class identity. It also examines Burdett Coutts as 'other' within male dominated collecting practice and also examines the contrasting sites of acquisition, including auction, private sale and art dealer. Chapter Two looks at Burdett Coutts as patron and collector of art and Chapter Three uses biographical data to examine Burdett Coutts's role as heiress and philanthropist in the fashioning of class identity. Chapter Four examines Burdett Coutts as a patron of architectural projects and considers the construction of St Stephens Church, Westminster and her contrasting domestic architectural projects in social housing and housing on her private estate. It concludes with her ambitious public architectural scheme at Columbia Market.

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Ms Tracey Earle, archivist at Coutts & Co, London gave access to the archive and helpful information on the correspondence of Thomas Coutts. The Earl of Harrowby kindly gave me access to the Harrowby archive at Sandon Hall, Staffordshire, and Michael Bosson, the manager of Sandon Hall, provided archive assistance and information in biographical matters relating to the family.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the relationship between patronage, taste, gender and artistic consumption in the fashioning of identity by Angela Burdett Coutts (1814-1906), a woman who was in the unusual position of being unmarried, independent and extremely rich at a time when the majority of women were constrained by marriage and/or domestic duties. It concentrates on her artistic patronage as it manifested itself through her collection of fine art and through her architectural patronage in the form of church, domestic and commercial architecture. Although Burdett Coutts collected many other items such as furniture, porcelain and books it is not my intention to examine these aspects of her collecting practice which would render it too extensive for the purposes of this dissertation.

In the following pages I examine the life and artistic patronage of a woman who is still little-known today and yet was described by Edward VII as 'after my Mother the most remarkable woman in the country'.<sup>1</sup> Her fame stretched so far beyond Britain that her scandalous marriage and appearances at society events would be reported and commented upon in editorials as far away as Australia and the United States of America, yet following her death in 1906 she would seem to have quickly dropped into obscurity save for her friendship with Charles Dickens, which had led to a large correspondence, of which few letters of hers remain.<sup>2</sup> This may be partly due to her reluctance to authorise a biography during her lifetime for, despite her high-profile building projects, she had a reputation for modesty and privacy. Although her marriage caused an outcry at the time, it is unlikely that she had any other reasons for caution; perhaps she sought an escape from the public eye from a life which was very well known for its very public (and private) acts of philanthropy. Indeed the Columbia Market and Square building schemes were among the most eye-catching and ground-breaking in terms of social philanthropy of the day and were

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<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of John Hays Hammond* (New York, 1935), pp.438-40, quoted in Edna Healey, *Lady Unknown* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1978), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See Alison Booth, 'pop. chart' in *How to Make it As A Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004 ).

widely reported in contemporary newspapers; even the relatively small-scale water fountain commemorating Greyfriars Bobby attracted enormously publicity and enduring popularity.<sup>3</sup>

In 1880 the Tasmanian *Mercury* reprinted an article from the English satirical newspaper *Truth*.<sup>4</sup> It considered Burdett Coutts 'probably the most powerful woman in the world' but also confessed that her individuality has not made itself much felt either in society or politics... 'she merits a civic crown, but has hardly the personal popularity of Miss Nightingale, nor does she excite any of that enthusiasm ... of Grace Darling'.<sup>5</sup> It went on to speculate on the reasons for this. Was it a want of a sense of humour - 'it has been alleged that the Baroness has no sense of humour at all', - or her personal characteristics - 'her acts, her manners never give offence;... they do not seek to attract, still less to charm and captivate; ... she has called forth none of the devotion which women far less worthy have inspired'. While the article concludes with a paean to her good sense and benevolence, this is an unusual article in its assessment of her character as the vast majority of contemporary newspaper articles on Burdett Coutts were usually extremely sympathetic, as my discussion on her architectural projects in Chapter Four will demonstrate.

Alison Booth has examined the collective biographies of women between 1830 - 1940 and compiled a table measuring the relative standing of the most popular female subjects in all non-specialised biographies of women published in English over three twenty-year spans, 1850-1870, 1880-1900 and 1910-1930.<sup>6</sup> Of one hundred and thirteen subjects, the top ranking is Joan of Arc (under the category 'paragon'), with a total of thirty eight entries, then Elizabeth Fry (philanthropy/reform), thirty six, followed by Florence Nightingale (nursing/reform) with thirty three. Burdett Coutts (philanthropy/reform) is ranked 83<sup>rd</sup>. Somewhat surprisingly she is unmentioned in any of the selected compilations between

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<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Veitch, *Edinburgh* (London: Batsford Books, 2009), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> *The Mercury* (14 August 1880), National Library of Australia archives [www.nla.gov.au/nla.news-article/8986708](http://www.nla.gov.au/nla.news-article/8986708) accessed 9 December 2009.

<sup>5</sup> *The Mercury* (14 August 1880).

<sup>6</sup> Booth, *How to Make it As a Woman*, passim.

1850 and 1860, gains five entries between 1880 and 1900 and then falls to only two between 1910-1930. Women who captured the popular imagination with stories of bravery such as Grace Darling and Joan of Arc, romance and history, such as Queen Elizabeth I, are easy to locate in the popular imagination but Burdett Coutts fulfilled none of these criteria. Her story lacked the romance of a rise from poverty to riches of a Nell Gwynne nor marked her out for her learning or writing such as Jane Austen. Octavia Hill, who does not feature in the popularity chart at all, has surpassed Burdett Coutts for her role in the history of social housing.

A dearth of information, therefore, makes the task of examining Burdett Coutts very difficult. The letters she did leave are also written in appalling handwriting which renders them almost entirely illegible. This was a characteristic that her secretary, Charles Osborne, suggested that she enjoyed, possibly betraying both an arrogance but also perhaps a deep reluctance for her thoughts to be known.<sup>7</sup> It certainly renders the task of assessing her life and work difficult.

The thesis also looks at Burdett Coutts's artistic patronage as it reflects broader concerns with the place of art, gender and culture within Victorian society, discusses the growing commodification of art and its use in terms of taste, accumulation and display as a signifier of class.

## **Sources and Methods**

### **Archives**

I have drawn extensively upon the biographical background of Burdett Coutts as a significant influence on her collecting practice and patronage. My intention to examine Burdett Coutts's collecting practice was hindered by lack of first person narrative. There are no personal diaries nor other writing available, as in the case of other major collectors such

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<sup>7</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

as Ferdinand Rothschild or Catherine Schreiber, and therefore we have no insight as to motivation. The fact that the collection was largely disposed of following Burdett Coutts's husband's death in 1922 has also meant that I have had to draw extensively upon the Christie's auction catalogue of 4 May 1922 for the contents of her collection.

I was fortunate in being permitted to use the extensive family archives at Sandon Hall, Staffordshire, the home of Lord Harrowby. Again, there is a scarcity of papers written by Burdett Coutts herself and the archivist admitted that the archives, at time of consultation, needed professional organisation and referencing. However, although it was useful for family correspondence it was of limited value from the point of Burdett Coutts's collecting practice or philanthropic activities.

Similarly, I was extremely fortunate to be given access to the picture notes of Charles Osborne who was Burdett Coutts's secretary from 1887 to 1898. These notes, which are now in the hands of a descendant of the Burdett Coutts family, provided much information on provenance and alerted me to the controversy regarding Faed and copyright. Further notes by Osborne which were intended for his own unrealised biography of Burdett Coutts, along with additional wide-ranging correspondence, form the basis of the archive in the British Library. Again, the archive contains relatively little of Burdett Coutts's own letters and, what is available is often illegible. While Osborne's collection of material is extremely useful, it is of course by its nature subjective; there is very little criticism of his late employer, indeed to modern eyes it is at times highly sycophantic in its listing of Burdett Coutts's many virtues.

Where possible I have consulted other archives in the British Library, Coutts & Co, county and local libraries and the Church Building Council (formerly the Council for the Care of Churches), and when unable to visit in person institutions such as the National Library of Scotland and the Peabody Trust kindly supplied archival material by post and in the case of the Peabody Trust, further information on the strangely unknown architect Henry Darbishire. Visits to the libraries of both the R.I.C.S. and R.I.B.A. also provided me with institutional minutes and reports and in particular the R.I.B.A. provided me with reports of papers given by Darbishire on the subject of housing the urban poor. The box of papers in

the Westminster City Archives provided an invaluable source of information on the building of St. Stephen's church in which it was possible to observe the day-to-day evidence of patronage, albeit through second and third parties. This provided a unique glimpse into the control she exercised on one of her philanthropic schemes and the use of agents in her employ to carry out her wishes. The Twining Papers were also a valuable insight from a disaffected clergyman's wife into the personal life of Burdett Coutts but of course by their very nature must be treated with caution.

## Secondary Sources

Although the 1950s saw the publication of two editions of letters from Charles Dickens to Burdett Coutts and a biography by her great niece, Clara Burdett Patterson, the correspondence is limited, only Dickens' letters are reproduced, and the biography, which was criticised at the time for being 'artless' is primarily anecdotal.<sup>8</sup> However, in the wake of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s there followed a reappraisal of the lives and roles of women. Publishers such as the Virago Press (1973) were formed to publish and republish books by female writers and this focus on women's lives provoked a re-examination of the lives of relatively forgotten female figures such as Burdett Coutts, or as one review of the time put it 'women previously missing from history are at last...becoming visible'.<sup>9</sup> *Lady Unknown* by Edna Healey appeared in 1978 and it led to a further work by Healey four years later on the history of Coutts Bank which incorporates several chapters on Burdett Coutts. The biography by Diana Orton, *Made of Gold*, appeared in 1980, having been held back by the publishers owing to the huge amount of publicity given to Healey as the wife of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, there is evidence that an American academic, Barbara Kanner, intended to write a critical work focussing on Burdett Coutts's philanthropy and urban development work but this does not appear to

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<sup>8</sup> Review by Norman Shrapnel, *The Manchester Guardian* (5 June 1953), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth Hutchinson Crocker, 'Review of "Lady Unknown"' in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, vol 18, No. 3 (Autumn 1986), pp. 517-518.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Wainwright, 'Guardian Diary', *The Guardian* (20 January 1978), p. 11.

have been completed.<sup>11</sup> As a result I have relied considerably upon both the Healey and the Orton books for biographical information. The Healey biography, which is the much better known, is generally regarded as the standard life of Burdett Coutts and is the source most commonly consulted by writers but is poorly referenced compared to the Orton. Both works are now over thirty years old and I have tried to look at the life of Burdett Coutts in the light of modern scholarship, using the biographical material which I consider extremely important as an influence on Burdett Coutts's collecting practice. Neither biography tries to put Burdett Coutts into the context of Victorian philanthropy generally nor examines Burdett Coutts in the context of Victorian class and gender. They also display a tendency to see Burdett Coutts's life as reflected in the men who worked both with and for her which I would consider to be a reflection of the lack of first-person narrative available. Neither book addresses her art collection in any depth; Orton does not mention it at all. Both books were written for a general audience and as a result are also strongly narrative.

The introduction Burdett Coutts wrote for the philanthropic section of the women's building at the Chicago World Fair in 1893 is one of the few pieces of first-person narrative we have and a valuable insight into her philanthropic practice. Her views on class, education and dress are also revealed in the introduction to *Common Things*, essays written in connection with her prizes at Whitelands College. These were obviously tailored to a particular audience but it is unlikely that they do not accurately represent her thoughts on these matters.

In discussing Burdett Coutts's position within the framework of Victorian collecting practice I have used Gerald Reitlinger's 1963 analysis of nineteenth-century purchasing patterns and trends, but am aware of the hazards in this, written as it is from the perspective of fifty years ago. The dangers of evaluating works of art from their price alone is acknowledged but I have used evidence of prices paid in today's values more as a reflection of an aspect of

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Kanner, 'Angela Burdett Coutts, 1814-1906: Fragment from A Biography in Progress', in Reports of Proceedings in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, vol. 9 No. 2 (Summer 1977), pp. 195-202. Also see review of Orton's *Made of Gold* by Barbara Kanner, *Victorian Studies*, vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer 1981), pp. 520-521.



her collecting practice.

Burdett Coutts was often mentioned in contemporary newspapers. Her long life meant that this was a large archive of secondary information and I was able to use the on-line archives of *The Times*, *Observer*, *Guardian*, *New York Times*, the Princess Grace Irish Library, Monaco and the National Library of Australia to provide contemporary witness to Burdett Coutts and her many philanthropic activities and projects. Foreign newspapers provided me with less reverential opinion of Burdett Coutts than the more circumspect establishment view of the British national press. These were particularly useful in the case of the Burdett Coutts's marriage. The Heal Archive held by the London Borough of Camden was a very useful source of secondary information, press cuttings and miscellany relating to Burdett Coutts. Where possible I have used contemporary photographs and sketches to illustrate aspects of my analysis.

Stephen Greenblatt's enormously influential *Renaissance Self Fashioning* (1980) has led to an emphasis in recent scholarship on the fashioning of identities through material culture. As in similar studies on self-fashioning, I have employed a multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating cultural geography to investigate the use of space and display as a tool of material culture, art history, architectural history and gender studies in an examination of Burdett Coutts as a female working within the restrictions of Victorian society. This study also investigates Burdett Coutts's use of philanthropy, art collection and architectural projects in connection with her self fashioning as a member of the social elite, an identity compromised by her inheritance of a vast fortune from the will of her maternal step-grandmother, principal partner in the bank of Coutts & Co. As the very embodiment of the Bank in the eyes of her contemporaries, Burdett Coutts was forced to stress her aristocratic lineage in diverse ways, often involving the negotiation of traditional elite male arenas to do so. This is particularly exemplified in her art collecting practice and the construction of the church of St Stephen's, Westminster. Conceived ostensibly as a memorial to her father it was also a personal link not just with him but with the past and by extension her own aristocratic roots. Essentially however, it was also a projection of herself and I will argue that being a Burdett was integral to her identity.

This thesis incorporates recent scholarship on the study of collections and collecting, a subject which has come to prominence during the last twenty five years. Scholars such as Dianne

Sachko Macleod have focused attention on previously neglected collectors in an era which saw a dominant aristocratic collecting practice decline in the face of the emerging middle-class collector.<sup>12</sup> In conjunction with a class-based focus on previously neglected collectors, there has also been a reappraisal of the role of individual collectors, often those who have formed 'the other', that is, outside the male dominated collecting practice of the elite establishment. Major collectors such as Ferdinand Rothschild (1839-1898) and Thomas Holloway (1800-1883), have been reappraised in the light of recent cultural theory and hitherto neglected sources republished.<sup>13</sup> Focus has also fallen on previously neglected individual female collectors and their collecting practice, with a particular focus on gender, including female negotiation of male dominated public commercial arenas, display of material culture and the use of space and costume as instruments in the creation of identity or self.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting the increased interest in collecting, the multi-disciplinary *Journal of the History of Collections* was founded in 1989 and continues to be a focus for new studies in this subject. In 2009 a supplement examined several notable collectors particularly in relation to their collecting motivation. A biographical model was applied to several individual collectors with an analysis of the role of taste, material and personal display as class signifiers and the use of their respective art collections as major instruments in the forging of identity. While adopting this biographical model in a study of a neglected Victorian collector, this thesis differs in the scope of the patronage analysed, focussing on not just her use of her art collection as an instrument of self fashioning but also her patronage in the spheres of religious, commercial and domestic architecture and her involvement in both private and public social philanthropy.

As the product of two social classes Burdett Coutts does not fall easily into class-based analysis of patronage. Kim Reynolds argued that aristocratic women were more closely bound to their

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<sup>12</sup> Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Ferdinand Rothschild, 'Bric à Brac,' *Apollo Magazine* (1 July 2007), pp. 50 -77. Also Phillippa M. Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography of Victorian Art Collecting: Acquisition and Display*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London (2006) for studies of Rothschild and Thomas Holloway.

<sup>14</sup> For example see Lucy Worsley, 'Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley and Female Architectural Patronage', in *Journal of Architectural History*, vol. 48 (2005), pp. 139-162.

class than to their gender and<sup>15</sup> recent scholarship has also called into question the dominance of 'separate spheres' which has dominated academic discourse in recent years.<sup>16</sup> Whilst Burdett Coutts unquestionably moved within the traditional female sphere, working in the 'borderlands' or socially acceptable extensions to the world of domesticity that philanthropy offered, her wealth and unmarried status for much of her life enabled her to exercise a level of power and control over her projects which make her atypical even of the female elite to which she sought to bind herself. I have suggested that Burdett Coutts's great wealth and independence gave her the confidence to push Victorian gender constraints still further, notwithstanding her own conservatism, and strongly exert her authority and control over those in her employ, such as architects. It also gave her the confidence to concern herself with social concerns previously considered unacceptable for the respectable woman, namely the 'fallen woman' question. Indeed, it could be argued that as the head of her own home she did indeed operate in the same way as the traditional male head of a household with, as Leonore Davidoff suggests, the implicit right to make decisions with no reference to others.<sup>17</sup> I shall also demonstrate that it was her wealth, power and aristocratic 'hands off' approach to philanthropy, her use of agents and the diverse nature and scale of her philanthropic work which has contributed to her neglect as a pioneer of social housing and which has proved problematic in contemporary consideration of her life and achievements.

Throughout this thesis the use of power and control is very much in evidence. Burdett Coutts exercised her rights as patron extensively in church and domestic architecture, but this thesis demonstrates that, while the wish to ameliorate the conditions of the poor was doubtless to the forefront of her mind, the architecture and management of the schemes led to an almost panoptic vision of social control.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, she sought to improve food distribution with the

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<sup>15</sup> K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> See in particular Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History' in *The Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993), pp. 383-414.

<sup>17</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (London: Polity Press, 1995), p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

construction of a market project in Bethnal Green, an initiative which also would have had the affect of harnessing the disorder of the streets.<sup>19</sup> In this instance, however, the opposing forces were too strong and the project was a rare failure.<sup>20</sup> This thesis seeks to demonstrate that while Burdett Coutts's aims were primarily philanthropic, she was also taking part in nineteenth-century initiatives to control the lives of the potentially rebellious poor by the remodelling of building and infrastructure. Dana Arnold's recent work on the refashioning of London during the nineteenth century has also informed my reading of this aspect of Burdett Coutts's patronage as an extension of aristocratic refashioning of land and property on a grand scale.<sup>21</sup>

In my appendices I have sought to catalogue the picture collection, providing provenance and sale prices where possible in an attempt to provide a picture of Burdett Coutts as an art collector and the methods by which her collection was formed. It is impossible to say how much of the collection was dispersed prior to the major Christie's sale of 4 May 1922, but to my knowledge this is the first attempt to compile a record of the collection for which I have had the benefit of using previously unpublished sources in private hands, namely the catalogue of picture notes compiled by her secretary, Charles Osborne. This thesis also utilises spatial theory from the field of cultural geography in my discussion of identity, acquisition and display and I have used reproductions of the watercolour drawings commissioned by Burdett Coutts of the interiors of Holly Lodge to assist me in this aspect. The human relationship to objects has been the subject of much analysis, in particular Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1969) and Jean Baudrillard's *System of Objects* (1968) and these and more recent studies by scholars such as Mieke Bal and Susan S. Stewart have also informed my analysis of Burdett Coutts's relationship with her art collection.

Burdett Coutts was living at a time of increasing comodification. Indeed, a large part of her social

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<sup>19</sup> Millicent Rose, *The East End of London* (London: Cresset Press, 1951), p. 258.

<sup>20</sup> Diana Orton, *Made of Gold* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> Dana Arnold, *Rural Urbanism: London Landscapes in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

power was, as Karl Marx put it, based on her possession of a great deal of 'things'.<sup>22</sup> Jane Rendell has suggested that the act of consumption in itself is also empowering as a source of the creation of self identity and this thesis argues that Burdett Coutts's collecting practice demonstrates her confidence as a collector, unafraid to purchase pictures and objects by little known or neglected artists within public male arenas from which by nature of her gender she was an outsider.<sup>23</sup> The role of objects and their display as signifiers of 'good taste' and class signifiers has also been explored in relation to recent academic studies including the work of Susan M. Pearce, Trevor Keble and Thomas Richards. Whilst utilising recent scholarship in this field, I am at the same time acutely aware of the dangers of ascribing thoughts and feelings to people from the past; with so little first-person narrative available, the task becomes even more dangerous. Our main knowledge of Burdett Coutts, including her relationship with her collection, comes via a third party, her secretary, Charles Osborne, of whom we have little biographical information.<sup>24</sup> That he admired Burdett Coutts is evident from the records in the British Library, but by necessity we must be guarded in the view we form of her through another's eyes; Osborne too dismissed her as a collector and condemned her lack of 'taste'.<sup>25</sup>

The human compulsion to collect remains as strong as ever, even in a time of global economic stagnation. In September 2011 for example, *Apollo Magazine* advertised a seminar for the benefit of those contemplating assembling a collection.<sup>26</sup> The possible explanation for the widespread human need to collect remains a rich source of enquiry and the contribution of psychoanalysis, in particular Werner Muestenberger's critique of the collector, to my study is acknowledged.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Karl Marx, 'Theories of Surplus Value' in 'Grundrisse' quoted in G A Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Reference* pp. 124-5 cited in Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle 1851-1914*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (London: Athlone Press, 2002), p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Notes compiled on Burdett Coutts by Charles Osborne form the British Library archive, Burdett Coutts, BL 46402-46407.

<sup>25</sup> 'By One Who Knew Her Well', probably Charles Osborne, *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1907.

<sup>26</sup> 'How Do you Collect Art and Antiques in Today's Market' ? A Seminar hosted by *Apollo Magazine* in conjunction with *The Spectator*, to be held 3 October 2011, announced September 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Werner Muestenberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

However, the dangers of psychoanalysis in analysing the motivations of people from the past must not be forgotten. In a recent study Frank Herrmann contrasted the contemporary collector with those of the past.<sup>28</sup> He concluded that the modern collector is generally more interested in self-glorification than his predecessor, feels no compunction to share their collection with the public and is invariably more interested in tax advantages.<sup>29</sup> Such a view might be borne out by some of the questions posed by the advertisement for the *Apollo* seminar: 'is it still possible to put together a great collection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' ? Should 'investment opportunities alone drive today's collectors' ?<sup>30</sup> Although nineteenth-century collectors might have considered such issues privately, it is doubtful whether they would have been voiced quite so blatantly. Despite Herrmann's conclusion, recent studies of noted nineteenth-century collectors who left their collections for the benefit of the public, such as Isabella Stewart Gardner<sup>31</sup> and Josephine Coffin Chevalier have enabled us to look beyond the philanthropic legacy and to see other motivations, albeit perhaps unconscious, in their desire to collect.<sup>32</sup> We might have supposed that Burdett Coutts, the supreme philanthropist, might similarly have been motivated to share her collection with the public after her death but then be surprised to discover that she did not. Although willing to lend her pictures during her lifetime to numerous exhibitions she clearly had no desire to benefit the public posthumously.<sup>33</sup> What conclusion should we draw from this ? Was the collection too private to be shared ? Did she merely desire her husband to have the benefit of the collection during his lifetime ? Her motivation in this, as in so many of her actions is

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<sup>28</sup> Frank Herrmann, 'Collecting Then and Now: English and Some other Collections', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Supplement (November, 2009), pp. 263-269.

<sup>29</sup> Herrmann, 'Collecting', p. 269

<sup>30</sup> 'How Do You Collect Art and Antiques', *Apollo Magazine*, September 2011 advertisement.

<sup>31</sup> Rosemary Matthews, 'Collectors and Why They Collect: Isabella Stewart Gardner and her Museum of Art', Supplement to the *Journal of the History of Collections* (November 2009), pp. 183-189.

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Kane, 'Turning Bibelots into Museum Pieces: Josephine Coffin-Chevalier and the Creation of the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Supplement (November 2009), pp. 1-21.

<sup>33</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 63097. See also Last Will and Testament of Angela Georgina Burdett Coutts dated 8 August 1888.

unknown to us. As studies have also shown, it would be unwise to conclude that collectors who give their collections to their countries are motivated primarily by philanthropy and not self-glorification.<sup>34</sup>

## CHAPTER 1.

### ANGELA BURDETT COUTTS: TASTE, GENDER AND CLASS.

Angela Burdett Coutts occupied an ambiguous position in Victorian society as the product of both an aristocratic and commercial lineage. She was born on 21 April 1814, the youngest of a family consisting of three older sisters and one brother. Her next eldest sister Clara, was nine at the time of her birth, followed by Joanna, aged ten, Susan thirteen and Sophia nearly twenty, sufficient difference in ages for her upbringing to effectively be that of an only child. The Burdett family came from a long and distinguished aristocratic line, Hugo Burdett having come to England with William the Conqueror. The family owned several estates, most notably the Burdett country seat of Foremark in Derbyshire.<sup>35</sup> The Coutts family on the other hand was Scottish in origin. Thomas Coutts (fig. 1), Burdett Coutts's grandfather, was born in Edinburgh in 1735, the youngest of four sons of John Coutts (1699-1750), Lord Provost of Edinburgh. He was born into the powerful merchant class, second only to the nobility in the Scottish social hierarchy of the time.<sup>36</sup> John was involved in Scottish banking at the highest levels and his four sons all followed him into the family business. By the 1760s however, the business had become the sole responsibility of Thomas Coutts with premises in the Strand, London.<sup>37</sup>

Coutts was one of several banking families which came to prominence during the late

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<sup>34</sup> Eva Rovers, 'The Art Collector - between Philanthropy and Self-Glorification', *Journal of the History of Collections* Supplement (November 2009), pp. 157-161.

<sup>35</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> Edna Healey, *Coutts & Co 1692-1992: Portrait of a Private Bank* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 21.

eighteenth century. From the 1760s onwards land ownership and agriculture were bringing increasing economic rewards; landowners experienced the benefits of a building boom and people invested enthusiastically in Government stock, the Bank of England and the great trading companies.<sup>38</sup> Techniques of commerce and capitalism improved and England supplanted the Netherlands as the most important commercial nation in Europe. Coutts Bank was at the forefront of these new developments. At the same time, as new wealth as personified by bankers such as Thomas Coutts began to threaten the precisely graded society of the eighteenth century, questions of taste and the definition of a gentleman became a preoccupation.<sup>39</sup> For some it was defined as being in the possession of wit, money and manners, but invariably inherent in the definition was the possession of 'good taste', a quality which a true gentleman or lady might be expected to possess, the possession or lack of it being a key feature in an assessment of vulgarity.<sup>40</sup> Neither money nor good taste were enough, however, to ensure complete acceptance into aristocratic society; a notable example of this being Thomas Hope (1769-1831). Hope was from another family of Scottish bankers who had emigrated to Holland in the seventeenth century and prospered, indeed it was said of them that they employed commerce not merely as a means of creating sufficient wealth to enable them to live like gentlemen and to rival aristocracy but that 'they made an aristocracy...of commerce in itself'.<sup>41</sup> Upon his return to England in the 1780s, however, Hope was determined to become a public figure so that he could 'influence public taste' through his collecting practice, patronage and own designs.<sup>42</sup> However, although welcomed by fellow connoisseurs he soon discovered that 'neither art nor money was sufficient in themselves to win over the hearts of Englishmen to a nouveau riche foreigner'.<sup>43</sup> Although there was scope for upward social movement which

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<sup>38</sup> Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Pelican, 1982; repr. Penguin, 1990), p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Porter, *English Society*, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England, 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 139.

<sup>41</sup> David Watkin, *Thomas Hope 1769-1831 and the Neo-Classical Idea* (London: John Murray, 1968), p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Watkin, *Thomas Hope*, p. 31

<sup>43</sup> Watkin, *Thomas Hope*, p. 8.



released potential class tension, it was hard to break into landed society at the highest levels.<sup>44</sup> Coutts's daughter, Sophia, had encountered great opposition to her marriage from her future husband's family. The patriarch of the Burdett family, Sir Robert Burdett, disliked 'business' of any kind and had also objected to the match on the basis of rumours of lunacy in the Coutts family.<sup>45</sup> Although a payment of £25,000 and the promise of more to follow upon the death of Coutts persuaded the Baronet to be reconciled to the match, Thomas and Susannah Coutts were apparently only reluctantly invited to Foremark, and then coldly received there.<sup>46</sup> According to Healey, Coutts was an unostentatious man, somewhat shabby in appearance, unambitious personally apart from a desire to 'exert patronage for his friends and to bring honour to the name of Coutts'.<sup>47</sup> He was distinguished as a banker for his combination of discretion, 'exactness' and a generous kindness with a 'ready acceptance of human frailty'.<sup>48</sup> These traits enabled him to build up a wide list of powerful and influential customers, attracting wealthy English and foreign nobility and ultimately members of both foreign and British royalty, including King George III and his sons. This lack of ostentation and generosity to many wealthy - and influential - customers would have helped to diffuse any resentment amongst them. In fact, whilst trade was in general looked down upon, England was exceptional in that the youngest sons of peers did enter into certain forms of trade, namely large-scale overseas trade or finance.<sup>49</sup> Amanda Vickery has argued that the crucial social divide in the Georgian period was between genteel commerce and retail trade or 'polite and vulgar', and that this led to widespread, if not universal, social cohesion between professional and gentry in the

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<sup>44</sup> Porter, *English Society*, p. 50.

<sup>45</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> Coutts was extremely sensitive upon this subject as two of his brothers, James and Patrick, suffered from mental health problems and he himself suffered from depression throughout his life, see Healey, *Coutts*, pp. 174, 175.

<sup>47</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 128.

<sup>48</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 128.

<sup>49</sup> Porter, *English Society*, p. 52.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>50</sup> Although Vickery states that the land/trade boundary was often crossed and re-crossed by individuals and led to a largely social intercourse of commercial, professional and landed elites, loss of status was a source of dread and privilege closely guarded.<sup>51</sup> In 1763 Thomas Coutts had himself confounded society's expectations by secretly marrying Susannah Starkie, a nursemaid employed by his brother James.<sup>52</sup> At a time when marriage amongst the monied classes was invariably a matter of 'courtship, settlement and marriage' or rather, as Vickery puts it 'bargain and sale', the marriage would certainly not have been regarded as a good one.<sup>53</sup> It confounded societies's expectations and, according to Healey, led to an estrangement with Coutts's brother James, who may have been concerned about how this connection would have affected the bank's relationship with its customers.<sup>54</sup> The Rev. William Bagshaw Stevens, curate to the Burdett family, later noted in his diary that Coutts was 'a worldly character who has never shown any wrong headedness excepting in marrying his vulgar wife, a quondam servant of his brother's'.<sup>55</sup> Whatever her social shortcomings, after her marriage Mrs. Coutts was received at the highest social levels, playing hostess to the Prince of Wales and his brothers, the Dukes of Kent and Clarence.

By the nineteenth century women were generally perceived as taking their status from their fathers and if married, their husbands.<sup>56</sup> It is very likely therefore that Burdett Coutts would have seen herself primarily as a baronet's daughter. However, her money came from her banker grandfather; she had been forced to add the name Coutts to Burdett as part of the

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<sup>50</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 20, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 82.

<sup>54</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 10. Unfortunately, Healey cites no evidence for this.

<sup>55</sup> Diary entry for 15 June 1793, G. Galbraith ed., *The Journal of the Rev. William Bagshaw Stevens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 88.

<sup>56</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 19.

terms of her inheritance and this may have left some legacy of class insecurity. Lady Mary Fox, the daughter of a peer, bemoaned the advent of the penny post: 'It goes to my heart to see disappear all the little priviledges (sic), the prestige that we enjoyed - but now vulgar penny wise and pound foolish ideas are the order of the day'.<sup>57</sup> Loss of status also led to feelings of hostility to newcomers. Susan Dalhousie wrote to her husband upon his appointment to Gladstone's cabinet: 'I am longing to hear how Mr G treats you, it is the only point I am not satisfied about, not because he is your age and above you but because I am always afraid of these people that are not born in good rank'.<sup>58</sup>

Marriages between higher status men and attractive women from a lower class have a long history. Society was less forgiving of a match in which the woman married beneath her class.<sup>59</sup> The mother of Lady Charlotte Schreiber married her children's teacher and Schreiber strongly resented her loss of status, a situation exacerbated by her own first marriage to an ironmaster:

My mother's unfortunate marriage so doing excluded me and now I really believe I have accomplished it and need not henceforth toil through pleasure for the sake of money. My children, now I hope and believe will have none of those struggles to make what I have felt so humiliated by.<sup>60</sup>

There was no question of Burdett Coutts losing rank to her husband following her late marriage however, as he had been granted royal authority to use the name of Burdett Coutts before his own surname - William Lehman Ashmead Burdett-Coutts Bartlett - but the Bartlett was soon dropped and he was known as W.L. Burdett Coutts.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 15.

<sup>58</sup> Letter dated 25 May 1845 Dalhousie MSSGD45/14/59 cited in Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 14. Gladstone was the son of a merchant.

<sup>59</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 236.

Specialist books of conduct had been around since the early eighteenth century but their publication had soared from the 1770s onwards as the new commercial wealth as personified by Thomas Coutts became a powerful force.<sup>62</sup> By the nineteenth century conventions of good taste were central to the construction and consolidation of class identity and guidance manuals for conduct and etiquette were still available but in a more widely disseminated form.<sup>63</sup> To have taste was defined as the ability to judge, or exercise discernment, and how one dressed and decorated one's home was a manifestation of that taste and as well as an expression of the subject's personality.<sup>64</sup> Charles Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) was one of the most successful guides of its time, its title implying that taste could be acquired painlessly, without arduous study and with confidence through the author's professional standing as an architect and designer.<sup>65</sup> Eastlake sought to differentiate between fashion and taste:

the faculty of distinguishing good from bad design in the familiar objects of domestic life as a faculty which most educated people - and women specially - conceive that they possess... the general impression being that it is the peculiar inheritance of gentle blood and independent of all training.<sup>66</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu explored the nature of taste in *Distinction*, formulating his concept of 'habitus', whereby taste is removed from the common sense view of it as being either a product of personal idiosyncrasy or a function of wealth and instead becomes systematically defined as any convention of social coherence.<sup>67</sup> In his analysis of the cultural preferences

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<sup>62</sup> Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, p. 94.

<sup>63</sup> Trevor Keble, 'Everything Whispers of Wealth and Luxury: Observation, Emulation and Display in the Well-to-do Victorian Home' in Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth, *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950* (London: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 69-87, p. 69.

<sup>64</sup> Keble, 'Everything Whispers', p. 29.

<sup>65</sup> Keble, 'Everything Whispers', p. 69.

<sup>66</sup> Charles Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 1878 (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1969, repr. 1986), p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, trans Richard Nice, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 1969, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, repr. 2004).

of cross-sections of French society in the 1960s, Bourdieu concluded that art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimising social difference.<sup>68</sup> The judgement of taste, he argued, is the supreme manifestation of the discernment which, by reconciling reason and sensibility defines the accomplished individual.<sup>69</sup> According to Bourdieu, 'taste' is therefore continually in the process of revision according to shaping and expanding experience, in short it becomes cultural capital.<sup>70</sup> Trevor Keble has examined the diaries of two sisters, Emily and Ellen Hall (1819-1901 and 1822-1911), which show how they used the design and decoration of their home to project their status and personal identity.<sup>71</sup> The diaries reveal their sensitivity to the conspicuousness of wealth through furnishing and decoration and an ambiguous understanding of the correlation between taste and money. One of the entries speculates on the price of furniture and decorative items in their host's house and also reveals their awareness of social origins:

She is a great beauty and he is said to be the Christy of Bond St. the Hatters but he is reasonably refined in manner and has cultivated taste - so that we should be less fortunately well off he showed us a pair of old china vases, which he had the good luck to buy at a small dealers at Kingston for £15 which Wareham, the London dealer, promises £40 for, if he wished to sell them...People can do these things when they make £...s a day in trade.<sup>72</sup>

They were very aware of the impact of their own domestic decoration on others and also of the interiors of others, which they would sometimes incorporate into their own decorative schemes: 'I took several notes and made some rough sketches'.<sup>73</sup> Keble concluded that home is more than the traditional Victorian idea of a private environment, a refuge from

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<sup>68</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup> Keble, 'Everything Whispers', p. 79.

<sup>72</sup> Diary entry Wednesday, 22 June 1870 in Keble, 'Everything Whispers', p. 80.

<sup>73</sup> Keble, 'Everything Whispers', p. 81.

the stresses of the outer world, but also a social place providing models of design, behaviour and taste.<sup>74</sup> The interior is subject to social scrutiny and construction and an explicit bond within local social and class structure.

Burdett Coutts main residences were at 1 Stratton Street/78 Piccadilly and her 'country estate', Holly Lodge, in Highgate. Both of these residences reflected different aspects of Burdett Coutts's identity and status and acted as showcases for her art collection. Sometime around 1805 Thomas Coutts met the actress Harriot Mellon (fig. 2). Between 1810 and 1814 the health of Coutts's wife Susannah began to deteriorate whilst Coutts's attachment to Harriot increased. During this time Coutts encouraged Harriot to invest in property and she acquired Holly Lodge (fig.3), a house and estate situated on Highgate Hill. This was eventually bequeathed to Burdett Coutts and an article by Mary Spencer-Warren in the *Strand Magazine*, 1894 described the house:

Stepping over the threshold...you are at once in a cool entrance hall, hung with some rare old paintings and portraits, amongst them being the Queen, Prince Consort, and a print of Sir Francis Burdett...in the hall is Bassano's *Spoiling the Egyptians*, then I note a picture denoting a reception of volunteers on the lawn of Holly Lodge...In the other rooms I note some fine paintings by Wilkie, Brueghel, Harrison Weir, Frith, Teniers, and Hogarth; in addition to several by ... Edmund Caldwell. I have not yet done with portraits ...here is one of Sir James Brook, Dr Moffat and other illustrious men <sup>75</sup>

The article takes great care to guide the reader through the house. Over the vestibule was a nailed horse-shoe, 'a reminiscence of Mrs Coutts'- a homely decoration which would have been unlikely to have been seen in such a public and prime position in the town house in fashionable Stratton Street.<sup>76</sup> In different parts of the house there are more portraits of the people she has known, such as Charles Dickens, David Garrick and the Duke of

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<sup>74</sup> Keble, 'Everything Whispers', p. 82.

<sup>75</sup> Mary Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', *Strand Magazine* (April 1894), pp. 348-360.

<sup>76</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 350.

Wellington.<sup>77</sup> Photographs accompanying the article (fig. 4), from watercolours by Alfred Warne Brown (1851-1913), very much give the impression of a homely and bourgeois house. Burdett Coutts erected tent dressing-rooms for visitors owing to 'the extreme smallness of the house...', rendering further accommodation necessary when guests came to dinner.<sup>78</sup> One apartment contained all sorts of 'curios and precious things' and a mineral collection previously owned by the geologist William Tennant.<sup>79</sup> A further collection of china was 'all fashioned in imitation of vegetables', there was also a Chinese dragon, a clock tower carved by Russian prisoners and many other 'objects of interest'.<sup>80</sup> The impression is that the house was stuffed with 'things', personal souvenirs as well as favourite pictures in their own right, prompts for memory. Indeed, the objects served this purpose in the article itself as it uses the displayed objects as prompts for anecdotes about the baroness and her life and work as the writer was shown around the house. Undoubtedly many of these objects had no great economic value but were precious to Burdett Coutts for 'their associations', or as Susan Pearce has noted, they were 'active carriers of meaning' holding meaning only as far as they related to other meaningful objects or in this case associations for Burdett Coutts.<sup>81</sup> While there are undoubtedly Old Masters among the paintings - Breughel and Bassano for example, - it would seem that the most prestigious paintings were at the town house, 1 Stratton Street, which was principally used for large parties.<sup>82</sup> Holly Lodge seems to have been used primarily for outdoor receptions and more intimate gatherings in the garden in the summer months.

In 1794 Thomas Coutts had acquired the lease of 1 Stratton Street and originally Sir Francis Burdett and his family lived there with Coutts whilst in London until Coutts bought the

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<sup>77</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 351.

<sup>78</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 358.

<sup>79</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 358.

<sup>80</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 358.

<sup>81</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *Museum, Objects and Collectors* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p. 20.

<sup>82</sup> Clara Burdett Patterson, *Angela Burdett Coutts and the Victorians* (London: John Murray, 1953), p. 3.

adjoining house at 78 Piccadilly (fig.5). In 1814 Susannah Coutts severely scalded herself and died of her injuries. Four days after her burial on 14 January 1815 Thomas Coutts secretly married Harriot Mellon.<sup>83</sup> Thomas Coutts's daughters, who had tolerated his relationship with Harriot while their mother was alive, were appalled at the marriage.<sup>84</sup> The fierce arguments that ensued forced Thomas and Harriot Coutts to leave 78 Piccadilly until Harriot bought both 1 Stratton Street and 78 Piccadilly from Thomas Coutts for thirty thousand pounds. Sir Francis Burdett was incensed on his wife's behalf and angered Coutts so much that he ordered him to leave the house. They subsequently set up home close by in St James's.<sup>85</sup>

The house in Stratton Street was undoubtedly the most prestigious of Burdett Coutts's residences, located as it was in the heart of the most fashionable and wealthy area of London.<sup>86</sup> By the time Burdett Coutts inherited the house in 1844 it was still decorated in the ostentatious style favoured by Harriot Coutts, subsequently the Duchess of St Albans, a trait often mentioned in association with her in contemporary accounts and discussed further in Chapter Three.<sup>87</sup> The downstairs drawing room was curtained in gold damask, the walls lined with blue, fluted silk, scarlet carpeted stairs led to the drawing rooms in which the chairs were black and gold, the windows were dressed with swagged golden curtains and the room adorned with rich cut-glass chandeliers and mirrors.<sup>88</sup> Lest there be any doubt as to the source of these riches, dominating the room was the large marble statue of Thomas Coutts by Chantrey.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The first ceremony was, in fact, invalid as there were insufficient witnesses and the ceremony was repeated on 12 April 1815, Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 24.

<sup>84</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 37.

<sup>85</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 37.

<sup>86</sup> Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (31 December 1906).

<sup>88</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 50.

<sup>89</sup> Now in the vestibule of Coutts & Co in the Strand.



We have no evidence as to whether this was the style when Thomas Coutts was alive but Harriot evidently felt no need to pander to any sensibilities of her second husband, the Duke of St Albans, in emphasising to whom this house had originally belonged nor to whom she owed her good fortune. It is highly probable that it was subsequently redecorated by Burdett Coutts but we have no record of the interior during her life. What we do have is a description of the house in 1922 just prior to the sale of her house and collection.<sup>90</sup> In describing the interior of a typical Victorian mansion, the writer, Sir Charles Hercules Reed, a former trustee and Director of the British Museum, paints a sombre picture. The visitor, entering a 'dimly lighted hall', is:

ushered silently still, for the carpets are triple-thick, up a broad staircase solid and respectable beyond words, but sadly in need of a coat of paint, and would ultimately find himself in a cosy and cheerful room, where his host spent much of his time. This, in common with the staircase, the corridors and the rooms of state, would be filled with fine pictures, and other works of art would be seen in cabinets around the walls or placed on tables in the middle of the room... Throughout the house,...pictures are to be found at every passage, and watercolor (sic) drawings and engravings in every room. Over the whole house, at normal times, hangs a kind of gloomy pall, which only lifts on the occasion of some great reception.<sup>91</sup>

Such houses, says the article, have virtually disappeared, but of such houses 'none is more characteristic than that of the Baroness Burdett Coutts, ... on one of the best sites of the city, in Piccadilly, facing Hyde Park, next door to the Duke of Devonshire's and opposite the Ritz Hotel...its' plain and unpretending brick exterior gives no hint of the riches within'.<sup>92</sup> The thrill of entering a forgotten world with all its associations is assuredly painted by the writer, and would have brought the auction to the notice of potential buyers with the tantalising chance to buy into this heritage. In fact, although the house may have shared many interior characteristics of other Victorian mansions, the average American reader would not have known that the façade of 1 Stratton Street with its balcony and bow

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<sup>90</sup> Charles Hercules Read, 'Treasures of the House of Burdett Coutts', *The New York Times* (6 February 1922).

<sup>91</sup> Read, *The New York Times*, p. 41.

<sup>92</sup> Read, *The New York Times*, p. 41.

windows, would have been extremely old-fashioned and uncharacteristic of the area by 1922.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, during the course of the nineteenth century most of the eighteenth-century houses between Hamilton Place and Hyde Park Corner were transformed into palatial, if short-lived, mansions for the very rich.<sup>94</sup> In particular Piccadilly Terrace became known colloquially as *Rothschild Row*, inhabited by members of the banking family and others involved in finance, cotton, spinning and coal mining.<sup>95</sup> Burdett Coutts seems to have been content to leave the exterior of her town residence unchanged, perhaps to emphasise her long residence and to keep her distance from the 'new money' which had moved into the area and built substantial houses in the classical style, by the 1840s itself a badge for upward mobility.<sup>96</sup> 1 Stratton Street would have been opened up for entertaining on a grand scale and provided opportunities to display the finest pictures to the wealthy and influential guests who attended her soirees. Acquainted with most of the notable people of the time, it was recounted that her dinner parties were noteworthy more for the worthiness of those attending than their gaiety; it was recorded that 'elderly gentlemen were certainly too numerous' at her assemblies and that there were a preponderance of bishops.<sup>97</sup>

In 1920 *The Times* described 1 Stratton Street on the occasion of its first reception since the war, when the pictures and other collections had been restored to their previous positions in the house after storage.<sup>98</sup> Her husband, Ashmead, had not lived in the house for long after Burdett Coutts's death. In 1911 it had been the home of the American Ambassador during the 'coronation season' (it had also at one time been mooted as an American Club for gentlemen, presumably Ashmead was keen to exploit his American roots).<sup>99</sup> Now he

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<sup>93</sup> 1 Stratton Street was itself demolished in 1925.

<sup>94</sup> J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches: Style and Status in Victorian and Edwardian Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 176.

<sup>95</sup> Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches*, p. 176.

<sup>96</sup> Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches*, p. 42.

<sup>97</sup> Unreferenced quotation from Lady St Helier in Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 76.

<sup>98</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920).

<sup>99</sup> *The New York Times* (4 July 1911).

was seeking to re-emphasise his association with an aristocratic wife and an illustrious history as personified by the house and its contents. From the report in *The Times* it is evident that the family portraits of Burdett Coutts, her parents, grandfather and step grandmother were prominently displayed.<sup>100</sup> Famous original portraits of William Pitt by John Hoppner (fig. 6), Henry Raeburn's Sir Walter Scott (fig. 7) and British heroes such as Nelson and Hardy were on display, as well as 'other persons of contemporary fame'.<sup>101</sup> The use of a picture 'gallery' in the house is noted, a traditional and aristocratic device for displaying portraits.<sup>102</sup> Here it was almost entirely devoted to portraits by Joshua Reynolds and the Old Masters acquired in the Samuel Roger's sale in 1856 and the writer notes that this provenance provides 'a high place for pedigree'.<sup>103</sup> Elsewhere were noted the miniatures and prestigious first editions in the library, including Shakespeare and manuscripts of Charles Dickens and Alexander Pope.<sup>104</sup> The article notes that the large porcelain collection 'of all great fabriques, English and Continental' was also 'striking'.<sup>105</sup> Ashmead was evidently not interested in changing the house after Burdett Coutts's death, using it instead to emphasise its powerful and historical associations and by extension his own position in the political establishment and social hierarchy. The carefully chosen guests would have been made fully aware of the history of the house and its associations.

Burdett Coutts was using objects to define herself at both her houses but at different levels. In the Piccadilly residence there was the projection of status through internal decoration and the most prestigious Old Master paintings, status symbols easily identifiable to others. The legacy of the Burdett family was reinforced with the financial power of Coutts; in the

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<sup>100</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920).

<sup>101</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920).

<sup>102</sup> Gervase Jackson Stops, ed., *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 31.

<sup>103</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920).

<sup>104</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920).

<sup>105</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920).

Highgate house, the more private residence, the more bourgeois side of the family is represented.

She collected pictures good and bad and indifferent, miniatures, engravings, china, books, relics, silver, Christmas cards, numbers of illustrated papers, and a score of other things. Questions of intrinsic value had little weight. Seldom let go of anything, prized cheap as much as priceless; her three houses were museums, containing perhaps the most varied and ill-assorted collections ever made.<sup>106</sup>

Thomas and Susannah Coutts had three daughters (four sons died in infancy), Susan (born 1771), Frances (born 1773) and Sophia (born 1779). Known from childhood as the *Three Graces*, all married 'well' in the eyes of society; Susan to Lord Guilford, the son of Lord North and Frances Coutts to the Marquis of Bute. In 1793 Sophia Coutts (fig 8) married Sir Francis Burdett (fig. 9), eldest son of Sir Francis Burdett (1716-1794). According to Healey, Burdett Coutts later described her childhood as an 'ideal' one but there is ample evidence that relations within the Burdett family were strained.<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, the relationship between Sophia and Sir Francis Burdett quickly deteriorated. Even as early as January 1794, only five months after their marriage, the Rev. Stevens, curate to the Burdett family, commented that Sophia was:

A Spoiled Child. She expecting her Husband to be her Slave, Her Doll...She does not understand him (He) has no idea of those little sweetening attentions which make the Bliss of Life, Birthdays, Marriage Days and all fond Memorials he tramples upon. He is too much a Philosopher to be happy or to make happy.<sup>108</sup>

Sir Francis Burdett had been inspired by post-Revolutionary France and began to move in radical circles, heavily influenced by the Radical lawyer the Rev. Horne Tooke.<sup>109</sup> In the wake of the French revolution the Government had introduced various measures to cope

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<sup>106</sup> Charles Osborne in Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>107</sup> Unreferenced, cited in Healey, *Coutts*, p. 275.

<sup>108</sup> Diary entry for 6 August 1795, Galbraith, *Diary*, p. 276.

<sup>109</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 219.

with the surge of clubs and societies seeking parliamentary reform. In February 1793 war was declared on France and rebels like Tooke were rounded up and arrested.<sup>110</sup> Following further repressive measures, including the suspension of Habeas Corpus in 1794, Burdett was considering leaving England to live in France.<sup>111</sup> In an effort to dissuade him Thomas Coutts obtained without his knowledge a parliamentary seat in a 'a rotten borough', until in 1807 he was elected as an MP for Westminster, an 'open constituency' which he was to represent for thirty years.<sup>112</sup> Sir Francis Burdett's Radical politics were a source of concern to Coutts who feared alienating his aristocratic and royal customers.<sup>113</sup> Burdett's stormy political career was to reach its apogee with his arrest in April 1810 as a result of his support for a well-known radical, John Gale Jones, who had been imprisoned for protesting against secret debates in the House of Commons.<sup>114</sup> Riots ensued and several people were killed and injured.<sup>115</sup> Imprisonment in the Tower of London followed until he was released two months later to be feted as a national hero, a position that he was to retain for many years to come.<sup>116</sup>

In 1798 Sir Francis Burdett began an affair with Jane Harley, Lady Oxford.<sup>117</sup> By the time of Angela Burdett Coutts's birth this affair was over and the relationship between her parents had improved but Sir Francis was often away on business.<sup>118</sup> Probably as a result of the tension in their marriage Lady Burdett was constantly plagued with rheumatism, headaches and 'general nervous disability', and was often travelling, seeking cures for these and other

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<sup>110</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 30.

<sup>111</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 30.

<sup>112</sup> Sir Francis was elected as Tory MP for North Wiltshire in 1837.

<sup>113</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 230.

<sup>114</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 32.

<sup>115</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 33.

<sup>116</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 230.

<sup>117</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 32.

<sup>118</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 38.

unspecified maladies.<sup>119</sup> The heir, Sir Robert Burdett, was estranged from his parents; Burdett Coutts is said to have once sat down to dinner with him as a girl and to her mortification only learnt of his identity later.<sup>120</sup> As a young child, therefore, Burdett Coutts was left largely in the care of her elder sister Sophia and it seems her time was largely divided between her father's ancestral home of Foremark and her paternal grandmother's estate of Ramsbury Manor in Wiltshire.<sup>121</sup> With his first child, Sir Francis had been a rather distant parent. According to the Rev. Bagshaw Stevens he had brought up the girl according to the principles of Rousseau, having given clear instructions that 'no one is to notice it, speak to it, or play with it'.<sup>122</sup> By contrast, Francis Burdett and his wife apparently indulged their youngest daughter. This additional closeness between father and daughter and her father's frequent absences from home must have led to a heightened sense of excitement when he did return and increased the affection she felt for him. This closeness was increased still further following her sister Sophia's marriage in 1833 when Burdett Coutts also became her father's companion and secretary.<sup>123</sup>

Burdett Coutts's collecting practice may have been significantly influenced by her mother's desire to spend time abroad. In 1826, at the age of twelve, Burdett Coutts accompanied her mother and sisters on an extended three year tour of Europe.<sup>124</sup> Exposed to European aristocracy at an impressionable age, such a trip is likely to have had a significant impact on the formation of her taste.

Sophia Burdett had spent time in France, Italy and Germany as a young girl with her parents and sisters prior to the Revolution and it is probable that she viewed this tour in the

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<sup>119</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 35.

<sup>120</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 30.

<sup>121</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 36.

<sup>122</sup> Diary entry for 18 August 1795 in Galbraith, *The Journal*, p. 270.

<sup>123</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 43.

<sup>124</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 35.

same way, as something of a 'grand tour' for her daughters.<sup>125</sup> In 1788-9 she had attended the Convent of Penthemont, one of two fashionable establishments of education in France, attended by all the daughters of the greatest families and extremely expensive. It was in effect a finishing school more notable for indulgence and luxury than education.<sup>126</sup> Here Sophia would have made influential friends and acquaintances while her father entertained the social elite and extended the business network of the bank in Paris where he entertained on a lavish scale.<sup>127</sup> An article in *The New York Times* prior to the 1922 sale refers to the intimate connection with French aristocracy made by Thomas Coutts during his stay in Paris in the 1790s, which led to him acquiring 'a magnificent six hundred piece collection of Sevres porcelain and a further Sevres dessert service of some two hundred pieces of 'the most celebrated painters and gilders of the factory'.<sup>128</sup> As the French Revolution took hold the family had moved on to Rome and Bavaria before returning to England in 1791.<sup>129</sup>

Sophia seems to have retained influential connections in France and Angela Burdett was introduced to Louis Philippe and his sister, Adelaide, a friend of Sophia's.<sup>130</sup> Such acquaintances would have brought the young Angela Burdett into a world where the buying and selling of paintings, furniture and porcelain would have been a familiar one. It was a time when the collections of notable French and Italian families were increasingly coming onto the market following the unrest of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars and the dispersal of old collections and the foundations of new collections were being made. One family to benefit from the outpouring of works of art, furniture and porcelain were the Rothschilds. Lionel Rothschild regularly attended the Paris sales in the 1830s: 'Be so good to let me know if you would like some old inlaid furniture, a secretaire or

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<sup>125</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 35.

<sup>126</sup> M. W. Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett and His Times, 1770-1844* (London: Macmillan, 1931), p. 23.

<sup>127</sup> Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett*, p. 23.

<sup>128</sup> *The New York Times* (6 February 1922).

<sup>129</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 21.

<sup>130</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 43.

commode made in the time of Louis IV. Here these things are quite the rage, or if you would prefer, some old Sevres China'.<sup>131</sup> His brother, Mayer, also profited from the sales as a letter from his dealer, Alexander Barker, makes clear:

The fine collection of precious objects you have, have been obtained in consequence of the disasters of the ex-royal family in France and the misfortunes of others connected with them and if not purchased at the time they presented themselves could never have been obtained. <sup>132</sup>

A comparison may be made with the American collector Isabella Stewart Gardiner who was schooled in Europe and travelling extensively there at a similar age to Burdett Coutts.<sup>133</sup>

The exposure to European art and architecture seems to have had a great impact on Gardner who at the age of sixteen expressed her desire to have a large house 'filled with beautiful pictures and objects of art'.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, Ferdinand Rothschild described the powerful influence effect growing up in a house full of beautiful objects and paintings had upon him.<sup>135</sup> It is tempting to believe that as a sensitive child Angela Burdett would have absorbed something of the impact of the art world at this time and it would have made a considerable impression. There were certainly French and Italian Old Masters in her own collection, notably Greuze, Watteau, Raphael and Tintoretto (see Appendix I).<sup>136</sup> We do know that as a result of her travels in France, Italy and Germany Burdett learnt to speak French and Italian and was to enjoy travel all her life.<sup>137</sup> She returned to England aged fifteen in 1829

and from that time she began to see a great deal of Harriot Coutts, now the Duchess of St

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<sup>131</sup> Letter from Lionel de Rothschild dated 17 April 1831 to his mother, Hanna, Rothschild Archives, RSF 109/24/42 quoted in Richard Davis, *The English Rothschilds* (London: Collins, 1983), p. 65.

<sup>132</sup> Davis, *English Rothschilds*, p. 97.

<sup>133</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 183.

<sup>134</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 183.

<sup>135</sup> Rothschild, 'Bric à Brac', p. 56.

<sup>136</sup> Christies' Auction Catalogue for 4 May 1922.

<sup>137</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 35.



Albans and soon began to be a favourite with her.<sup>138</sup>

Susan Pearce has identified three approaches to collecting, the souvenir, the fetish and the systematic.<sup>139</sup> An examination of Burdett Coutts's art collection would suggest a not unexpected combination of all three but arguably there is a particular tendency to souvenir and fetish, most obviously in the case of her collecting memorabilia of her father. In *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*, the psychoanalyst Werner Muestenberger suggests that for collectors the objects they cherish are an inanimate substitute for reassurance and care, often arising from a childhood in which they may have lacked love and tenderness.<sup>140</sup> Also, 'perhaps more telling, those objects prove both to the collector and to the world, that he or she is special and worthy of them'.<sup>141</sup> For some, this leads to relief in religious pursuits, for others an identification with those in need of care and protection.<sup>142</sup> From what we know of Burdett Coutts's life it would be easy to see her as almost a textbook example of this.

Burdett Coutts's veneration of her father was a strong feature of her personality throughout her life and given her strongly developed acquisitive streak, it is tempting to view Burdett Coutts's almost obsessive collecting of paternal images as a reflection of a childhood lacking in parental presence. According to her secretary, Charles Osborne, she always kept a special regard for friends who had known him and in her correspondence there are several letters thanking her for portraits of him sent by her to old family friends who had known Sir Francis.<sup>143</sup> Charles Osborne recorded that she preferred to sit in the middle drawing room of 78 Piccadilly because of its association with Sir Francis and that

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<sup>138</sup> There is a handwritten note in the Harrowby family archives recording that Angela Burdett was 'boosted and pushed' by her governess Hannah Brown, into the good favours of her step-grandmother but there is no other evidence to support this, Harrowby Archives. Notes 159, Vol.1058, 1836-1840.

<sup>139</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>140</sup> Muestenberger, *Collecting*, p. 18.

<sup>141</sup> Muestenberger, *Collecting*, p. 256.

<sup>142</sup> Muestenberger, *Collecting*, p. 18.

<sup>143</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L4/1-39.

'many examples of Sevres and Worcester china were often valued less than some cracked plate or fancy jug, especially if the jug bore a portrait of her father'.<sup>144</sup> Osborne further noted that:

no one associated with Sir Francis ever appealed in vain nor no one ever offered her a portrait of Sir Francis, or one of his innumerable jugs or other pieces of china to commemorate some event in his life that she did not buy it, often at a price which must have made the owners bless the name and fame of Burdett.<sup>145</sup>

In many ways this disproportionate veneration Burdett Coutts showed for her father is echoed in that of Queen Victoria and her veneration for Prince Albert. There are in fact several similarities between them. Both asserted their independence from their parents as soon as they were able to, Victoria upon her ascendancy to the throne and Burdett Coutts upon inheriting her wealth.<sup>146</sup> Both were particularly influenced by and formed attachments to much older men - Lord Melbourne and the Duke of Wellington respectively - and each formed very strong relationships with their governesses, Baroness Lehzen and Hannah Brown.<sup>147</sup> However, although Burdett Coutts's attachment to her father's memory was intense and seemingly disproportionate, there was no Prince Albert in her life to influence her collecting practice in the same way as Albert did Victoria. What they did share was a strong use of their collections as souvenir and fetish. Victoria's collection reflected her somewhat pathological attraction to people and places that were important to her, and once an image was found satisfactory, it would often be replicated throughout her houses and in many forms, copies, miniatures and gifts.<sup>148</sup> An examination of Burdett Coutts's collection demonstrates a similar strong attachment to people and places personal to her or her family and the use of images as gifts. According to Osborne, Burdett Coutts gave likenesses of her

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<sup>144</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>145</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>146</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 17.

<sup>147</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 17, 52.

<sup>148</sup> Winslow Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1967), p. 29.

father as presents and especially cherished any objects bearing his portrait. As one such recipient confirmed:

I had the admirable likeness of Sir Francis Burdett which I had the honour of receiving from your hands as now fixed in my dining room and every day brings back to my memory the many happy hours I passed in his society at his hospitable table where I was so frequently a guest. <sup>149</sup>

Of course such a gift was also a useful device for bringing not just her father but herself to the recipient's attention.

Burdett Coutts also guarded the reputation of her father closely. A month after the death of her parents in 1844, Angela Burdett Coutts's brother, Sir Robert Burdett, was contacted by Lady Charlotte Bacon who claimed to be the illegitimate daughter of Sir Francis Burdett.<sup>150</sup> She pleaded imminent poverty and starvation for herself and seven children if Sir Robert did not help her.<sup>151</sup> Sir Robert dismissed the matter so she then contacted Burdett Coutts. Although there was a strong family resemblance and her father had paid her an allowance for many years, Burdett Coutts refused:

all I know is, that Lady Charlotte Bacon, was Lady Charlotte Harley...and that for a very few years previous to his death, my dear Father afforded her and her family some pecuniary assistance...For me to come forward to the world to acknowledge more than this would be I think a most ungrateful return for the affection of the kindest parent ever given.<sup>152</sup>

All attempts to persuade her failed.<sup>153</sup> She closed her mind to the evidence, and although according to Charles Osborne, in other matters she would normally: 'sit down and think

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<sup>149</sup> Letter dated 27 July 1847 from Arthur Meyrick to Angela Burdett Coutts, WCA Burdett Coutts J6/1-24.

<sup>150</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 70.

<sup>151</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 70.

<sup>152</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 99.

<sup>153</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 71, 72.

about the subject, select the sequence of ideas, ... two or three hours thinking about it', her mind seems to have been made up from the beginning.<sup>154</sup> Osborne remarked that 'although she had excellent powers of perception when it suited her purpose no one could appear blinder'.<sup>155</sup> This desire to protect her father's memory continued throughout her life. In a letter to Osborne in the British Library dated 16 May 1900 Burdett Coutts wrote that she could not authorise or sanction any biography of her father: 'it is better for me to still adhere to the decision which I and my sisters came to when we lost him, not to edit or sanction any publication of his life'.<sup>156</sup> It is probable that she could not bear any speculation over the nature of his relationship with Lady Oxford to resurface and sully his memory.

For Queen Victoria, a great deal of her reluctance to purchase works of art following Albert's death was her reliance on his taste: 'how dreadful to be always lacking his advice and working in the dark without his unerring eye and great taste'.<sup>157</sup> In his comments upon Burdett Coutts's collecting practice - 'things good, bad and indifferent' - Osborne appears to be criticising Burdett Coutts's own 'good taste'.<sup>158</sup> As John Walker has observed, the possession of 'good taste' implies a discriminating ability, usually perceived as pertaining to a small minority.<sup>159</sup> The fact that she collected disparate objects, 'good, bad and indifferent' would therefore imply a lack of discernment, an essential requirement of good taste. It also suggests that she was seen primarily as an accumulator rather than a serious collector.

A similar tendency to collect unsystematically was shown in the eclectic collection of Josephine Bowes, nee Coffin-Chevalier (1825-74).<sup>160</sup> The daughter of a clockmaker she

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<sup>154</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>155</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>156</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>157</sup> Diary entry for 30 June 1863, Journal p. IIV quoted Oliver Millar, *Victorian Pictures in the Collection of H.M. the Queen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 29.

<sup>158</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>159</sup> John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 187.

<sup>160</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', pp. 1-21.

became a vaudeville actress and then the mistress of John Bowes, a Durham landowner, M.P and collector who had left England after failing to overcome the stigma of illegitimacy.<sup>161</sup> Following their wedding in Paris in 1852, Bowes bought the former chateau of Louis XV's mistress Mme du Barry and for the next few years Josephine spent an enormous amount of money furnishing both the du Barry house and their Paris town house in sumptuous style.<sup>162</sup> Sarah Kane suggests that Josephine deliberately set out to emulate du Barry who had similarly risen from modest beginnings to become the Kings' mistress and who had spent extravagantly, patronised contemporary painters and had planned to set up a gallery of great painters and sculptors of the past.<sup>163</sup> Josephine aspired to similar high society status; she had all the accoutrements of wealth such as a carriage and a box at the opera; in the 1860s alone, her husband spent well over a quarter of a million francs on jewels. They also entertained lavishly.<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately it took more than this to raise Josephine to respectability for this was also a style adopted by the notorious grandes horizontales of the demi-monde.<sup>165</sup> The motivation behind the museum is unknown but, by 1864, John Bowes was already buying on Josephine's instructions, several plots of land in Barnard Castle in which to build it.<sup>166</sup> Kane suggests that the fact that the wide variety of objects of her collection were destined for a museum from the onset avoided the collection being dismissed as belonging to an ordinary bourgeois, or even demi-mondaine at a time when the distinctions in dress and trappings of upper-class life were becoming blurred.<sup>167</sup> Kane further suggests that these disparate objects, once given museum status ceased to be classed as mere bourgeois bibelots and instead became specimens of material culture.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 1.

<sup>162</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 4.

<sup>163</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 15.

<sup>165</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 15.

<sup>166</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 13.

<sup>167</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 15.

<sup>168</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 16.

Inspired by the English model of industrial arts museum she chose England as the destination for her museum, transcending gender and social stereotypes in the process.<sup>169</sup> With no such intention of 'surviving himself through his collection' as Jean Baudrillard put it, Burdett Coutts's own collection seemed to lack serious consideration.<sup>170</sup>

A culture of mass consumerism dominated by conspicuous consumption or, as identified by Karl Marx, commodity fetishism, was in ascendancy in European and American society in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as the bourgeoisie sought to create new identities for themselves through the purchase of commodities or 'things'.<sup>171</sup> Thomas Richards has credited the Great Exhibition of 1851 as the springboard in Britain for this obsession, being in itself a homage to the way in which commodities were produced and to consumption of these commodities.<sup>172</sup> Both a museum and a market, it held the promise that one day the objects on display might belong to all.<sup>173</sup> This growth of a consumer society in which everything could be bought and sold infiltrated every aspect of society. Marx and Engels perceived this commodification to extend to the labouring poor themselves:

wherever the bourgeoisie has got the upper hand, it has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has piteously torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors" and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than "callous cash payment".<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Kane, 'Turning Bibelots', p. 16.

<sup>170</sup> Jean Baudrillard, trans. James Benedict, *The System of Objects*, 1968 (London & New York: Verso, 1996), p. 104.

<sup>171</sup> Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 16.

<sup>172</sup> Richards, *The Commodity Culture*, passim.

<sup>173</sup> Richards, *The Commodity Culture* p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel More, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin Books, 1967 rep. 1974), p. 82.

Concern for the degradation of the labouring poor and their reduction from skilled workers to mere units of production was similarly raised by John Ruskin and William Morris.<sup>175</sup> Ruskin referred to the 'money value' of knowledge in his lectures given at Oxford in 1863-65 and felt he had to emphasise in the matter of teaching at the university: 'I wish it at once to be known that I will entertain no question of the saleability of this or that manner of art...above all, his heart must not be the heart of a hireling'.<sup>176</sup>

This period of commodification also coincided with the formation of some of the greatest art collections, as a positive mania for collecting took hold both in Europe and America.<sup>177</sup> The new wealth of the United States, which few European collectors could match, led to increasing amount of works of art leaving Europe. In *The Spoils of Poynton* Henry James explored this obsession for acquiring *things*. The widowed Mrs Gereth is fighting to keep her house which is full of objects obsessively acquired over the years but which are now due to go to her son, Owen. She disapproves of Owen's fiancée, Mona Brigstock because she does not share her appreciation for these objects or *things*. She prefers Fleda Vetch, who shares her own taste for such items: 'things were of course the sum of the world; only for Mrs Gereth, the sum of the world was rare French furniture and oriental china'.<sup>178</sup>

Old World met new in an account of an encounter with American collectors in the diaries of Lady Charlotte Schreiber (1812-1895), who did not develop a passion for collecting until she was over fifty and after ten years of marriage to her second husband, Charles Schreiber.<sup>179</sup> By this time all her children had married and her husband had stood down as an M.P. With new-found leisure both devoted enormous amounts of time to china hunting

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<sup>175</sup> William Morris, 'On Art and Socialism' delivered before the Secular Society of Leicester, 23 January 1884 in *On Art and Socialism* (London: John Lehmann, 1942), pp. 96, 97, 107.

<sup>176</sup> John Ruskin, *The Art of England and the Pleasures of England* (London: George Allen, 1904), p. 21.

<sup>177</sup> Rovers, 'The Art Collector', fn, p. 157.

<sup>178</sup> Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, David Lodge ed., 1897 (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 492.

<sup>179</sup> *Lady Charlotte Schreiber: Extracts from Her Journal*, ed., The Earl of Westborough (London: Greenwood Press, 1921), p. xiii.

expeditions and her journal refers constantly to the thrill of 'the chase'.<sup>180</sup> The Schreibers visited museums, collectors and European shops and dealers with an unquenchable enthusiasm, particularly during the years 1873-76, recording in detail prices paid and refused, the haggling and the tracking down of items. In her journal Charlotte Schreiber described with disapproval the wealthy, caught up in the cult of acquisition, buying wildly with no discrimination.<sup>181</sup> An encounter with German-Americans in Hamburg was recorded tartly by her: 'one of them, who seemed utterly disorganised by a long residence in Texas, could tolerate nothing that was not strictly for use, and the Almighty Dollar'.<sup>182</sup> Again in Hamburg in 1880 the Schreibers encountered a wealthy American lady, Mrs Moore, spending two thousand pounds left by her husband for the purpose of acquiring 'curiosities' with no knowledge of what she was buying. By the time they arrived in Amsterdam, they encountered her again, 'laden with purchases' continuing to buy extravagantly.<sup>183</sup> The Schreibers, despite the large funds at their own disposal, regarded themselves as superior, buying with discernment and knowledge despite their own enthusiasm for what Schreiber herself described as 'china mania'.<sup>184</sup> Schreiber also used disingenuous patriotism to justify her spending: 'I must stop these morning rambles into curiosity shops - or I shall be ruined - another five pounds - but then it is all going to the South Kensington. Love of Country again'.<sup>185</sup>

Of course not all wealthy Americans collected without discernment. There was a predominance of women in American collecting circles, often well educated and drawn from the American business and industrial world and pre-eminent amongst them was

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<sup>180</sup> Schreiber, *Extracts*, p. 127.

<sup>181</sup> Schreiber, *Extracts*, p. 82.

<sup>182</sup> Diary entry for 12 July 1874 in Schreiber, *Extracts*, p. 130.

<sup>183</sup> Schreiber, *Extracts*, p. 160.

<sup>184</sup> Schreiber, *Extracts*, p. xiii.

<sup>185</sup> Charlotte Schreiber diary entry for November 1884 quoted in Frank Davis, *Victorian Patrons of the Arts* (London: David and Charles, 1990), p. 38.



Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924).<sup>186</sup> She stated that she collected for her own pleasure and bequeathed her vast art collection to the museum which bears her name 'for the education and enjoyment of the public forever'.<sup>187</sup> Drawing upon current theory however, Rosemary Matthews argues that the basis of Gardner's collection was the emotional impact of the losses she experienced in her life, her serious collections a substitute for something else.<sup>188</sup> Sigmund Freud stated that artistic objects provided a source of renewal and comfort after the death of his own father and in the case of Gardner, family bereavements, the loss of her only child in particular, seem to have impelled her to reinvent herself several times.<sup>189</sup> In particular the death of her brother in 1875 led her to adopt his children and as a result attend the history classes of Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) at Harvard.<sup>190</sup> Under his influence she forsook jewellery collecting in order to collect rare books and manuscripts.<sup>191</sup> As a result of these cultural activities she formed a strong partnership with the art historian and dealer Bernard Berenson who was to strongly influence her subsequent collecting practice.<sup>192</sup> Again, following the deaths of her own father and another close friend, Gardner and her husband turned their attention to collecting antique art with the objective of creating a museum, something which became a compulsion after Jack Gardner died in 1894.<sup>193</sup> The eponymous museum is therefore very much a result of her personal vision; the house was designed and built as she directed and the objects are displayed within just as she ordered them.<sup>194</sup> In her case, argues Rosemary Matthews, acquisition became an antidote to

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<sup>186</sup> Charlotte Gere and Marina Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors* (London: Phillip Wilson Publishers, 1999), p. 130.

<sup>187</sup> Quoted in Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 183.

<sup>188</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 184.

<sup>189</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 184.

<sup>190</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 185.

<sup>191</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 186.

<sup>192</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 187.

<sup>193</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 187.

<sup>194</sup> Hilliard T. Goldfarb *The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum: A Companion Guide and History* (New Haven, 1995) pp. 18-20, quoted in Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 188.

loss, offering her distraction and a method of transference of emotion.<sup>195</sup>

Helene Kroller-Muller (1869-39), has been identified by Eva Rovers as using her art collection to establish one of the first museums of modern art in a personal pursuit of self-definition and recognition.<sup>196</sup> Uninterested in art until the age of thirty six when her daughter introduced her to the art appreciation classes of Henk Bremmer and with the unlimited financial resources open to her as the wife of a leading industrialist, with Bremmer's help she began to accumulate an art collection, which, within five years 'eclipsed every other in Bremmer's environment and far beyond it'.<sup>197</sup> According to Eva Rovers, without Bremmer's advice it would have been no more than 'a rich director's wife with a hobby but with Bremmer at her side she was respected as a collector even before her collection had been properly formed'.<sup>198</sup> In the early years her purchases were haphazard, relying heavily on Bremmer's advice, until she began collecting artworks from an idealistic basis, accompanied with the aim of reinstating beauty as a 'dominant power of life'.<sup>199</sup> With this aim her collection was no longer based on personal preferences but whether the work would stand the test of time (as she saw it) and she relied less on Bremmer and took a more pro-active role.<sup>200</sup> Rovers argues that Kroller-Muller's purchase of Van Gogh signalled to others that she had taste in investing in an artist who had previously been regarded as too risky an investment. According to Rovers, her purchase of his *Bridge at Arles* (1888) at auction in 1912 was a defining moment; it sealed Kroller-Muller's identity as a discerning collector, prepared to pay large amounts of money because she was one of the few to appreciate its artistic value and set a new standard for the economic value of Van Gogh's

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<sup>195</sup> Matthews, 'Collectors', p. 185.

<sup>196</sup> Eva Rovers, 'Monument To An Industrialist's Wife: Helene Kroller-Muller's Motives for Collecting', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2009), pp. 241-252, p. 241.

<sup>197</sup> Rovers, 'Monument', p. 242.

<sup>198</sup> Rovers, 'Monument', p. 247.

<sup>199</sup> Rovers, 'Monument', p. 246.

<sup>200</sup> Rovers, 'Monument', p. 249.

work. The purchase, Rovers argues, thus also bought her recognition, prestige and status.<sup>201</sup> As a final sign of the serious worth of their collection, in a part philanthropic, part economic decision, she and her husband donated the collection which bears her name to the state of the Netherlands.

Both Kroller-Muller and Burdett Coutts had sufficient wealth that they could afford to buy pictures without being concerned about drops in price.<sup>202</sup> Their purchases of previously unfavoured artists such as Joshua Reynolds by Burdett Coutts in the Rogers' sale of 1856 and by Kroller-Muller of Vincent Van Gogh led to renewed interest by the art world, a consequent rise in the economic value of the artists' work and for Kroller-Muller certainly, a greater respect as a collector. However, Burdett-Coutts does not appear to have added

significantly to her collection of Reynolds' paintings in subsequent years and although she continued to acquire Old Masters at major art sales no particular artist dominates the collection.

The use of art collections in a variety of ways to forge identities is obviously not confined to female collectors, 'the other' lies outside the establishment by reason of gender, class or religion. Phillippa Biltcliffe has contrasted the collecting practices of Ferdinand Rothschild and Thomas Holloway as an instrument in the fashioning of their identities. In the case of Rothschild, his Jewish birth and the fact that his closest friends were outside the establishment meant that he never felt totally accepted into British society, or as Richard Davis put it 'he always seemed to convey a perception of something a little exotic about him'.<sup>203</sup> Biltcliffe argues that Rothschild used his aristocratic collection of Old Masters and French eighteenth-century works of art and furniture, the construction of a magnificent house, Waddesdon Manor, specifically to house the collection and display it and the

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<sup>201</sup> Rovers, 'Monument', p. 247.

<sup>202</sup> Rovers, 'Monument', p. 247.

<sup>203</sup> Davis, *The English Rothschilds*, p. 101.

subsequent bequeathing of it as a public museum, as tools in forging an identity as a patriotic aristocrat and a connoisseur. By contrast, Holloway, the self-made businessman, used his art collection to fashion himself as a member of the bourgeoisie, preferring to buy contemporary art at the more business-like art auction as a means of guaranteeing provenance. Although both paid extravagant prices for their artworks, only Holloway, buying at the public auction was subject to ridicule and scorn.<sup>204</sup>

A specialist who made descriptive notes of the china for her, complained to me that the baroness appeared to think that the more china was chipped and cracked the greater its value. The truth was the more he disparaged a bit of china, the more concerned the baroness came to defend its value, she could not admit to a stranger that goods in her collection were practically worthless. She got rid of him and employed a more tactful cataloguer, one more in the sentiment of the owner if less knowledgeable. She was aware of the value of things as much as anyone but disliked the truth...She preferred to keep any disparagement to herself.<sup>205</sup>

This account by Burdett Coutts's secretary, Charles Osborne, would suggest that the objects in Burdett Coutts's collection seem to have been valued by her for their associations rather than economic or exchange value.<sup>206</sup> Her collection contained nothing from contemporary art movements such as Pre-Raphaelitism and the contemporary artists that she primarily commissioned, Sidney Hodges and Marshall Claxton, seem to have been commissioned primarily to record portraits of those closest to her or to copy pictures as gifts to friends rather than for stylistic reasons.<sup>207</sup> Examination of her picture collection would indicate that she seems to have had small collections within her main collection, notably portraits of Shakespeare and Shakespeareiana generally as well as her miniature collection and images of her father (see Appendix I). These diverse objects were, as Susan Pearce defines it, active carriers of meaning: 'they hold meaning only so far as they relate to other meaningful objects, for significance rests in the webs of relationships which is

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<sup>204</sup> Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 320.

<sup>205</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>206</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>207</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

physically inherent in each object'.<sup>208</sup> Perhaps in this collection of memorabilia relating to her father it is the nearest that Burdett Coutts came to a feeling of a collecting 'mania', that she was fuelled by a passion to accumulate these pictures irrespective of their monetary exchange or aesthetic values. Such a diverse collection would not have added to her reputation as a serious collector of art for it was outside the accepted conventions of contemporary taste which stressed discrimination. As Osborne observed, much of it was 'good, bad and indifferent' or 'rubbish' yet it had meaning for her, particularly so in the case of her father's image.<sup>209</sup> This would imply an emotional engagement with the items she collected, certainly I have found no evidence that she removed or disposed of any items in her collection once she had acquired them.<sup>210</sup> Michael Thompson has noted that such objects may have transient value, that is, an object may have decreasing economic value initially but in time may develop durable value.<sup>211</sup> I am not suggesting however that Burdett Coutts acquired these objects with the intention that they would necessarily increase in desirability or economic value, but because they had personal meaning for her. In her study of women's lives in Georgian England, for example, Amanda Vickery has described a world of rich and complex goods inhabited by her subjects.<sup>212</sup> When one of them, Elizabeth Shackleton, wrote about her possessions she dwelt at length on their sentimental and talismanic associations, for her they are more than mere status symbols, they have special meaning.<sup>213</sup>

As a female, many of the signifiers of the serious male collector were not open to Burdett Coutts. She was not able to profit from the society of other collectors in gentleman's clubs,

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<sup>208</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, p. 20.

<sup>209</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>210</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>211</sup> Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), quoted in Mark Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique and Curiosity Dealer 1815- c.1850: The Commodification of Historical Objects*, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton 2006, p. 7.

<sup>212</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 190.

<sup>213</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 190.

nor in most of the collectors clubs that were springing up. There is no evidence that collecting brought her into close contact with other women or like-minded collectors. Neither did she collect objects traditionally associated with women such as lace or china. The collecting of such items in themselves could lead to disparagement:: 'women as a rule have little taste for collecting books, prints or pictures, but it is a fact that they evince quite an attachment to their many china', china being suitable for the 'delicate fingers of women to handle'.<sup>214</sup>

Collecting could create networks of female friendships and a social milieu which could enlarge the horizons of women far beyond concerns of fashion, domesticity and philanthropy to which they were customarily confined.<sup>215</sup> However, there is no evidence that Burdett Coutts belonged to such networks or desired to, especially given her rather disparaging view of women generally.<sup>216</sup> Certainly as she was largely unencumbered by domestic responsibilities unlike so many women, she probably did not feel the same weight of restrictions placed on so many of her sex. However, such exclusivity may have also served to diminish her role as a collector. Charles Osborne tells us that for many years she was advised by Dr Frederic Carpenter Skey (1798-1872), an eminent surgeon.<sup>217</sup> Skey was a frequent visitor from around 1850 until his death in 1872.<sup>218</sup> According to Osborne he was 'a good judge of art and a considerable collector' and apparently several pictures and sketches in Burdett Coutts's collection were either bought for her or given to her by him.<sup>219</sup> Unfortunately, I have only been able to confirm two such gifts, *The Church in the Glen* (untraced), by George Beaumont and *The Tomb of Caius Sestus* (untraced), by Annibale

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<sup>214</sup> Maurice Jonas unreferenced, quoted in Gere and Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors*, p. 88.

<sup>215</sup> Gere and Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors*, p. 88.

<sup>216</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>217</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, 60 vols., H.C.G Matthew and Brian Harrison eds., in Association with the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50, pp. 857-8.

<sup>218</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>219</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

Carracci.<sup>220</sup> There are no other references to him in the picture notes or any letters referring to him, so his impact on the collection is impossible to assess.

Having the advice of a prominent artist, dealer or expert was a means of enhancing one's own status as a collector. Thomas Lawrence advised the banker J. J. Angerstein, Richard Cosway aided the Marquis of Stafford and Henry Tresham provided assistance to both William Beckford and Sir Richard Worsley.<sup>221</sup> As previously discussed, other notable female collectors such as Stewart Gardner were also advised by noted scholars, in the case of Gardner it was initially Eliot Norton and subsequently the art historian/dealer Berenson; Kroller-Muller had the advice of Bremmer and Ferdinand Rothschild that of Charles Davis, a great art dealer of the day, 'the finest amateur judge of French and English eighteenth-century art' and Rothschild's constant companion.<sup>222</sup> Informed advice by an acknowledged expert could give credibility to an individual's collecting practice which might have been dismissed otherwise. It is probable that Skey was not so widely known as a knowledgeable collector so as to add sufficient gravitas to her collection.

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<sup>220</sup> CON.

<sup>221</sup> Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France* (London: Phaidon, 1976), p. 29.

<sup>222</sup> Davis, *The English Rothschilds*, p. 242.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ANGELA BURDETT COUTTS: PATRON AND COLLECTOR

The patrons of our day neither bear historic names nor are they famous. If we enquire by whom particularly our school has been supported in it's advancement we shall find its patrons among the wealthier sections of the middle-class.<sup>223</sup>

#### **Collecting Practice**

The purchase and collection of works of art was the most effective way to prove that the purchaser was not merely rich and successful but also a person of taste and refinement; something that the *nouveau riche* entrepreneur felt keenly.<sup>224</sup> By the mid nineteenth century patronage no longer belonged to the aristocracy but to the great tycoons of the industrial

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<sup>223</sup> The *Art Journal* (1869) p.279 quoted in Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 5

<sup>224</sup> Rovers, 'The Art Collector', p. 157.



north and midlands who came to prominence in the 1840s, 60s and 70s.<sup>225</sup> Pictures by living artists became objects to be commissioned, discussed, exhibited, bought singly or by the score, re-hung, bartered, changed, sold by private treaty, auctioned, copied, revised and resold for ever-increasing prices.<sup>226</sup> London was the centre of a thriving art world. Pictures were bought directly from the artist, especially in the early years of the century, either as a finished work or a commission; or increasingly from a dealer, a class of men that had also become increasingly influential.<sup>227</sup> This shift in patronage was an endless source of fascination for the Victorians and a favourite topic of conversation.

If the source of patronage had altered, Burdett Coutts seems to have aligned herself with the aristocratic establishment. The pictures in her collection, although arguably eclectic in range, strongly reflected the aristocratic taste of the early nineteenth century as demonstrated in this letter from the dealer William Buchanan in 1803:

Vanity principally prompts the English to buy - and that Vanity leads purchasers to please the prevailing taste of fashion of their friends or be governed by the whim and voice of Artists. Of the popular Masters at present, Titian and Rubens take the lead. The former of these in his fine work will bring any money. In the same list I shall likewise rank Leonardo Da Vinci, the Carracci - Vandyke's compositors, historical - Guido's fine pictures, Claude's very capital pictures - Domenichino - Murillo's capital pictures, ... Rembrandt and beyond this short list I hardly think it safe to go unless for a highly celebrated and well-known Corregio, Raffaele, or M. Angelo (sic).<sup>228</sup>

All of these artists with the exception of Michelangelo, feature in Burdett Coutts's collection despite a reduction in their popularity by the time she was collecting fifty years later.<sup>229</sup> By the time Burdett Coutts had begun to collect in earnest, the collecting pattern

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<sup>225</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 209.

<sup>226</sup> Jeremy Maas, *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World* (London: Barrie & Jackson, 1975), p. 17.

<sup>227</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 237.

<sup>228</sup> Letter from William Buchanan to James Irvine dated 3 June 1803 in Hugh Brigstock, *William Buchanan and the Nineteenth Century Art Trade: A Hundred Letters to His Agents in London and Italy* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1982), p. 6.

<sup>229</sup> G. Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, 3 vols. (London: Barrie & Rockcliffe, 1961), I, pp. 108-118.

had changed, the aristocracy were no longer the arbiters of taste.<sup>230</sup>

Following the recession of the late 1850s, businessmen were eager to take part in the ritual of accumulation and display which was by then a standard feature of the monied middle class.<sup>231</sup> A mistrust of dealers and the authenticity of many Old Masters on the market had rendered their acquisition a fraught business.<sup>232</sup> Without the social assurance of an aristocratic background, middle-class collectors had turned increasingly to purchasing contemporary works of art directly or more commonly, via dealers, although as Macleod points out, it would be wrong to believe that these men were all 'self made men', few were from humble origins and self-made tycoons were the exception rather than the rule.<sup>233</sup> The vast amount of Old Masters that had flooded into the country in the first half of the century - more than six thousand Old Masters entered England in 1838 alone - and subsequent forgery scandals had led to a decline in sales as a new breed of collector drawn from the middle classes turned increasingly to contemporary artists.<sup>234</sup> In 1828 forty eight works had been attributed to Leonardo but by the end of the century only ten were still acknowledged as such.<sup>235</sup> The new collector preferred to look at the paintings being produced by contemporary artists, believing that there was more likelihood that the paintings were by whom they purported to be.<sup>236</sup> Further, as the patron of a modern artist he or she could exert their influence as to the manner in which it was painted, its content, etc; indeed it became a point of honour to purchase pictures by living artists.<sup>237</sup> They felt little need to emulate the collecting patterns of the aristocracy but set their own fashions,

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<sup>230</sup> Rovers, 'The Art Collector', p. 157.

<sup>231</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 209.

<sup>232</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 48.

<sup>233</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 6.

<sup>234</sup> The Marquis of Lansdowne purchased *Cupid, Mars and Vulcan* attributed to Rubens for £1,575 in the early years of the nineteenth century but it was subsequently proved misattributed and sold by his descendants for 250 guineas in 1898, Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 110.

<sup>235</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 115.

<sup>236</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 48.

<sup>237</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 14.

many relying upon the writings of art critics such as John Ruskin, Charles Eastlake and Mrs. Jameson to form their 'taste'.

Burdett Coutts inherited several paintings from the Duchess of St Albans and her parents, but it is impossible to know just how many pictures she inherited in this way (see Appendix II ). Some of her pictures were gifts from friends and favourite artists; others she bought directly from artists or at auction; and to a large extent she employed agents, either in the form of other artists, friends and, latterly, her husband.<sup>238</sup> W. P. Frith's *Private View at the Royal Academy, 1881* (1882) (fig. 10, private collection), shows her sitting on the left hand side of the picture amidst a group of ladies. The chief subject in the painting is Oscar Wilde, lecturing to a group to her right. Angela Burdett Coutts is depicted as one of the establishment, a group of art collectors listening to the words of the President of the Royal Academy, Frederick Leighton, rather than sitting among the aesthetes Frith is satirising. Unfortunately the provenance of the majority of her pictures is unknown but I have analysed the source of the pictures, where known, in Appendices II-VII. The earliest record of her collecting dates from 1839, when she was twenty five, when she purchased from the artist Emily Scott (fl 1825-1855), a portrait of her aunt, Lady Langham.<sup>239</sup> Emily Scott was the sister of Burdett Coutts's art master, Walter Scott.<sup>240</sup> From Osborne's notes it is evident that a large proportion of her pictures were bought at auction from some of the largest sales of the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>241</sup> Her earliest recorded purchases at auction were miniatures from the Strawberry Hill sale of 1842 but her main purchasing period stems from the major sales of the 1850s: Ralph Bernal (1855), Samuel Rogers (1856), Alton Towers (1857) and subsequently Hamilton Palace (1882), Blenheim Palace (1882), Leigh Court (1884), Bohn (1885), and Normanby (1886). It is evident that Burdett Coutts was confident enough to buy works by artists that by this time had fallen in popularity,

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<sup>238</sup> W. H. Wills (1810-1880), editor of *Household Words*, principal secretary to Angela Burdett Coutts, 1856-1867.

<sup>239</sup> CON. Emily Scott is best known as a miniaturist, Christopher Wood, *Dictionary of Art: Victorian Painters*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collector's Club, 1995), II, p. 465.

<sup>240</sup> Walter Scott (fl. 1831-1853), London based portrait and genre painter, Wood, *Victorian Painters*, II, p. 465.

<sup>241</sup> CON.

most particularly works by Reynolds acquired at the Rogers' sale. A number of major auctions also reflected the huge boom in art sales during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Record-breaking prices were achieved, and speculation in art accelerated with Britain's expanding economy. As a result of the boom in art sales there was also increasing reliance upon the services of the dealer.<sup>242</sup>

In June 1856 the *Art Journal* carried a story under the subtitle *Art Dealing in Glasgow* of how the dealer Louis Flatow had sold *The Black Frost* by Branwhite to Sampson, a picture frame maker and dealer.<sup>243</sup> Branwhite had happened to go into Sampson's shop and told them that he had sold Flatow two little pictures, one of which had that name and expressed a wish to see it. He then pronounced it a bad copy of his picture, though in an identical frame; and he had warranty for genuineness of work. He went back to Flatow who seemed surprised that a bad copy had been substituted. He had sold Branwhite's picture to a picture framer for twelve pounds but the man had later said that his customer did not want it and Flatow had taken it back. Flatow had then returned the original to Sampson. Later Sampson went to the Glasgow framer and found the original, wrote to Flatow and gave back the picture, the copy and twenty pounds: 'Mr. Fleteau (sic) has made a good thing of the business, having the picture, the copy and twenty pounds towards his expenses'.<sup>244</sup> This quotation reflects the contemporary cynical view of the dealer. The numbers of antique and curiosity dealers in London had multiplied by more than 1500% during the first half of the nineteenth century, rising from less than ten in 1820 to at least one hundred and fifty five by 1840.<sup>245</sup> Centred around the affluent St James's area of the West End with its centre in Bond Street, dealers were little trusted but increasingly relied upon and formed a source of competition for the collector who frequently found themselves outbid by them at auction. Henry Foster noted at the Stowe Sale of 1848:

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<sup>242</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 241.

<sup>243</sup> Probably Charles Branwhite (1817-1880).

<sup>244</sup> *The Art Journal* (June 1856), p. 199.

<sup>245</sup> Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique*, p. 3.

During the sale scarcely any respectable person could enter without being imported to entrust their commission to persons of this class (brokers)...that it was no use to offer personal biddings as the brokers attended for the purpose of buying and outbid any private individual.<sup>246</sup>

Foster also recalled that 'the villainy of the system will be judged when we add that four or five of these men generally work together'.<sup>247</sup> In his account of his collecting practice written in 1897, Ferdinand Rothschild devoted considerable time to his relationship with dealers, most notably Alexander Barker and Frederik Spitzer and made it clear how fraught these dealings were; the dealer was never entirely trustworthy no matter how ready he was to apparently provide articles for the collector.<sup>248</sup>

Mark Westgarth has charted the rise of the dealer at a time when distinctions between antiquarianism and commercial trade were becoming increasingly blurred. Dealers sought to shake off their associations with the ill-defined 'curiosity' and antiquity trade and take on the mantle as 'gentlemen' moving in the world of taste and fine art.<sup>249</sup> Their influence grew during the 1830s and 50s with the antique and curiosity trade lending objects to major exhibitions so that the exhibition also became a grand showcase for their stock whilst the dealer basked in the aura of respectability as participants in a more elevated venture.<sup>250</sup> Viewed as something of a necessary evil, the collector who wished to distance himself from the cut and thrust of direct negotiations with an artist or the battlefield of the auction, who needed contacts in the art world or merely reassurance, was forced to rely increasingly upon them. As A. G. Kirtz wrote: 'I am sick of commissions and dealing with artists at any rate - if in buying from dealers you pay thru the nose - you get what you want and what you have seen'.<sup>251</sup> In fact this was far from the case. The use of the dealer became increasingly

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<sup>246</sup> Henry Foster quoted in Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique*, p. 217.

<sup>247</sup> Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique*, p. 217.

<sup>248</sup> Rothschild, 'Bric à Brac', p. 61.

<sup>249</sup> MacLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 234.

<sup>250</sup> Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique*, pp. 166-170.

<sup>251</sup> Letter from A. G. Kirtz to F. G. Stephens dated 27 August 1865 Bodleian quoted in MacLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 241.

problematic as the question of the authenticity of objects came to the fore. However, by the middle of the 1850s only four patrons are known to have bought art solely from an artist and as the *Art Journal* recorded, in the fifteen years prior to 1868 dealers such as Agnews, Gambart and Flatow had shared a 'million of money' between them.<sup>252</sup>

Burdett Coutts seems to have employed E. M. Radclyffe (or Radcliffe) of Pall Mall, close to her home in Stratton St, as her main dealers, although Osborne also mentions Vokins and the firm of G. J. Morant.<sup>253</sup> The works acquired by them for Burdett Coutts included artists such as Benjamin West, Claude and William Hogarth and, despite dealing in these Old Masters, it would seem that Radclyffes were also still trading in curiosities and antiquities as they sold Burdett Coutts a ring which had belonged to David Garrick, a first edition of Shakespeare and 'other relics' in 1865.<sup>254</sup>

Burdett Coutts used dealers chiefly in her purchases from the major sales of the 1850s when her collecting first gathered impetus, notably the Bernal Sale of 1855 and the Samuel Rogers sale in 1856. In the Rogers sale and the Alton Towers sale of 1857, Burdett Coutts used Radclyffe. By the time of the later major art sales of the 1870s and 1880s she seems to have used her own agents such as William Banting, her then principal secretary W.H Wills, artists such as Sidney Hodges or her husband to bid on her behalf. Ashmead bid on her behalf at one of the biggest sales of the 1880s, the Hamilton Palace Sale in 1882, and at the Leigh Court Sale in 1884 she used William Banting as her agent. The artist Sidney Hodges also seems to have acted on her behalf in dealings with fellow artists.<sup>255</sup> In employing artists to act as agents Burdett Coutts was using an early Victorian model but it is perfectly understandable that she preferred to use trusted personal agents rather than rely on

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<sup>252</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, pp. 235, 241.

<sup>253</sup> CON. This firm shares the same name as a company of woodcarvers who operated in New Bond Street, perhaps an example of dealers diversifying or moving from one profession into another.

<sup>254</sup> Unreferenced, CON.

<sup>255</sup> Unreferenced, CON.

professional dealers.<sup>256</sup> She certainly attended auctions herself. The cartoonist Henry Furniss depicted her attending a sale at Christies, catalogue in hand, in 1881 (fig.11).<sup>257</sup> In this cartoon the figure of Burdett Coutts is clearly a studied portrait, partly marked by the details of her fashionable dress. She occupies a prominent place in the foreground and is the only one of just four women at the auction shown full faced; it is clearly a portrait of a person which would have been well known to the readers of *Punch*. The other females are merely tokens, one is only shown with her back to the viewer, one is nothing more than a frill of a dress and the despondent female in the front is clearly only a foil for Mr. Punch himself. The frenetic atmosphere and elite nature of the auction is suggested by the milling top hats and frock coats; Burdett Coutts is a strangely lone figure in this male dominated environment, an intruder in a boisterous gentleman's club.

In Burdett Coutts reluctance to use dealers she may be compared to Ferdinand Rothschild who disapproved of dealers, or 'Bond Street robbers' as he referred to them.<sup>258</sup> Rothschild preferred to use men of some social standing in their own right, such as Alexander Barker who, although seen by Rothschild as possessing good and fastidious taste, was also described by him as somewhat uncouth, slovenly and untidily dressed.<sup>259</sup> Although Barker was a professional dealer he was also a collector in his own right, a member of the Burlington Arts Club. Rothschild also used Samuel Wertheimer and his sons who also acted as buying agents for other members of the Rothschild family.<sup>260</sup> Ferdinand wished to spare himself 'the exposure, the gossip and ill-natured comments of the auction room and preferred the private treaty'.<sup>261</sup> Certainly the auction was the most public means of acquiring

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<sup>256</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 40

<sup>257</sup> *Punch* (25 April 1885), p. 195 under the title 'At A Picture Sale', No.8 in the series 'Interiors and Exteriors'.

<sup>258</sup> Ferdinand Rothschild in a letter to his aunt and uncle dated 9 September 1867, RAL000.26F quoted in . Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 201.

<sup>259</sup> Rothschild, 'Bric à Brac', p. 60.

<sup>260</sup> Rothschild, 'Bric à Brac', p. 61.

<sup>261</sup> VA 177 pp. 95-96, *Reminiscences of Ferdinand de Rothschild*, bound vol. (WA944 p. 23, typescript) quoted in Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 190.

art and might be seen as the personification of the commodification of art which characterised the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It also took a considerable amount of confidence, for people were at the auction to see and be seen, it was a public spectacle.<sup>262</sup> Competition was often keen as noted collectors sought to outbid each other and many relished the excitement of the bidding. It was a show of public taste, the collector's knowledge, ability and wealth were all on display. As sociologist Charles Smith put it 'auctions provide a milieu within which participants can freely exercise and exhibit their wills to possess; they are also, of course a contest in which participants' sense of control and power can be threatened, where they can suffer defeat and humiliation'.<sup>263</sup> Everyone at the auction, whether purchaser or spectator, participates either actively or passively as in a 'constantly fluctuating and unpredictable exchange of property'.<sup>264</sup> Although ostensibly open to everyone with the means to purchase, there was also an etiquette, unspoken rules which had to be followed, the failure of which would soon expose the newcomer to the disapproving gaze of the initiated: 'very few persons called out their own bids. That is bad form to do so on such occasions'.<sup>265</sup>

Burdett Coutts was a purchaser at one of the most prestigious sales of the late nineteenth century, Hamilton Palace. This auction, comprising pictures, sculpture, porcelain, furniture, bronzes and works of ornamental art was held by Christie's over a four week period in June and July 1882. It consisted of over two thousand lots from the collection of the 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Hamilton, a substantial portion of which had originally been owned by William Beckford, father-in-law of the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke, at Fonthill. It had been the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke's intention to create a huge palace wherein 'the first of our peers, first of cognoscenti' would create

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<sup>262</sup> Cynthia Wall, 'The English Auction: Narratives of Dismantling' in *Eighteenth Century Studies* (Autumn 1997), pp. 1-25, p. 20.

<sup>263</sup> Charles Smith, *The Social Construction of Value* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 177, quoted in Wall, 'The English Auction', p. 3.

<sup>264</sup> John Ott, 'How New York Stole the Luxury Art Market: Block buster Auctions in the Gilded Age' in *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 42, No. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 2008), p. 134.

<sup>265</sup> Ott, 'How New York', p. 143.



the 'first gallery of art our country can boast of'.<sup>266</sup> Such provenance would have added greatly to the attraction of the works for sale. As with other high profile sales of this time, the event was widely reported and the individual buyers of particular items and the prices they fetched noted in the national press. Such high sales prices were obtained that on one particular day *The Illustrated London News* could refer to 'only £16,000' being achieved'.<sup>267</sup> The publication of prices had also become an important cultural register which could be followed by all.<sup>268</sup> The elite nature of such sales was further emphasised by the production of special catalogues, in the case of the Hamilton Palace sale, specially illustrated and priced at one guinea, the guinea in itself a signifier of high social standing.<sup>269</sup> The auction also attracted foreign buyers. Some of the major paintings had been earmarked for acquisition for the National Gallery and this added to the excitement. *The Times* reported that Mr. Burton, the Director of the Gallery, and two trustees were there: 'near to them, however were to be observed two formidable opponents as agents expressly commissioned by the director of the Louvre who, it is now a matter of high congratulation to know, did not prevail against our director in any one instance'.<sup>270</sup> A nationalistic and highly competitive tone crept in, and the reporting was in a sort of language more suggestive of a sporting event such as a prize fight: 'Mr. Burton had again to meet his French opponent, M. Gauchez, in the contest for the great prize of the sale'.<sup>271</sup> The exodus of major works of art from aristocratic collections to other countries, and especially the United States, began in this decade and continued for the next twenty five years, much to the increasing concern of collectors and the government.<sup>272</sup> A 1922 report in *The Manchester*

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<sup>266</sup> David Wilkie, *The Arrival of the Marquis of Douglas at Hamilton Palace, Glasgow* (1844), pp 20, 21, quoted in A. A. Tait 'The Duke of Hamilton's Palace' in *The Burlington Magazine* (July 1981), pp. 394-402.

<sup>267</sup> *The Illustrated London News* (15 July 1882), p. 66.

<sup>268</sup> Westgarth, *The Emergence of the Antique*, p. 157.

<sup>269</sup> *The Illustrated London News* (15 July 1882), p. 66.

<sup>270</sup> *The Times* (26 June 1882), p. 10.

<sup>271</sup> *The Illustrated London News* (8 July 1882), p. 42.

<sup>272</sup> Helen Rees, 'Art Exports and the Construction of National Heritage In Late Victorian and Edwardian Great Britain,' *Economic Engagement with Art*. Supplement to the *History of Political Economy*, Vol. 31 (1999), p. 188.

*Guardian* on the display of Burdett Coutts's collection even states that Burdett Coutts was often called upon to buy English treasures to stop them leaving the country.<sup>273</sup> The competitive nature of such sales is also illustrated by the remarks of one buyer at an American auction, a 'railway baron,' recounted in the memoirs of the auctioneer:

Mr Huntington on more than one occasion told me that he did not care to buy at a private sale. He said 'I would rather come to your sales and give ten times more than the object was worth and have the pleasure of buying it and outbidding some of my friends'.<sup>274</sup>

In such sales buyers were provided with a larger audience in which to demonstrate their elite taste and status, not only to the spectators and bidders at the sale itself but also to a wider audience in newspaper reports.<sup>275</sup> There was also the cachet of owning something with a recognised provenance and rarity value and the sale offered a further validation of aesthetic judgement in the reactions of the crowd.<sup>276</sup> Huge crowds would gather at Christie's on the morning of an important sale and applause would break out when favourite pictures appeared. The excitement of the stock market came to the auction room. When the industrialist Henry Bolckow's sale took place in 1888: 'The throng stretched to the anteroom and down the staircase in King Street'. When Millais's *North-West Passage* (1874), reached four thousand guineas a huge cheer went up which could be heard in the street and beyond.<sup>277</sup>

Burdett Coutts's presence and participation in such auctions however, even if she did not

<sup>273</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (17 September 1921), p. 8.

<sup>274</sup> Thomas B. Kirby, typescript of an unpublished autobiography, American Art Association records, Box 2 Kirby Autobiography Meeting Transcript Third Draft, 9. AAA. Smithsonian Institution cited in Ott, 'How New York', p. 148.

<sup>275</sup> Ott, 'How New York', p. 134.

<sup>276</sup> Stuart Plattner, *High Art Down Home: An Economic Ethnography of a Local Art Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), quoted in Ott, 'How New York', p. 35.

<sup>277</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 222.

always bid herself, indicates a confident buyer who was not afraid to publicly purchase works of art which had sometimes fallen from favour. Most of her purchases from auction were Old Masters but her art collection also encompassed portraits and genre. I also would suggest that she felt some confidence in purchasing pictures at auction as provenance was sometimes more surely ascertained. Control was particularly important to Burdett Coutts as my discussion of her architectural patronage will confirm in Chapter Four. The auction would have rendered her less reliant on the notoriously unreliable dealer for provenance and as her confidence grew her reliance on dealers seems to have decreased as she preferred using her own agents to act for her.

### **Collector of Old Masters**

The fact is, Coutts have had a great deal to do always with men of Genius and they have a feeling for them and seem to think it is a credit to the House to have one or two to scold, assist, blow up and then forgive. This is the way I have gone on with them twenty nine years.<sup>278</sup>

The history of the use of art collections as a means of conveying prestige and status is a long one. Susan Pearce has discussed the use of objects in collections as a way of knowing the past, or of resurrecting the body of the past intact so that it might be expressed in the present, or as a 'relic'.<sup>279</sup> She notes that 'high art' has seldom been collected by women and that when it has it has usually been in conjunction with a husband or with family prestige or linked to non-intrinsic meaning.<sup>280</sup> Certainly Burdett Coutts's collection seems to serve as an illustration of such collecting practice. As has been already discussed, there are few records of women collectors such as Burdett Coutts and female collectors such as Sarah Rogers have been over-shadowed by their more famous siblings or husbands. The three houses of Alice de Rothschild, the collector sister of Ferdinand, contained a collection of mainly eighteenth-century pictures, jewellery, majolica, miniatures and other objects d'art. On her brother's death in 1898, however, she moved into his home, Waddesdon, and

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<sup>278</sup> From the Journal of B. R. Haydon, quoted *Faber Book of Diaries* in Healey, *Coutts*, p. 291.

<sup>279</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, p. 131.

<sup>280</sup> Pearce, *On Collecting*, p. 216.

devoted herself to his collection, even living there with the blinds drawn to protect the textiles. This self-effacement and secretive collecting practice (all traces of provenance were ordered to be destroyed after their deaths) has arguably contributed to her neglect as a collector.<sup>281</sup> The collections of most of the women who did collect have also been dispersed, and that of Burdett Coutts is no exception. Much of the following information therefore as to the content of her art collection is from the sales catalogue and her secretary's own notes.

The nucleus of Angela Burdett Coutts's collection was the purchases she made at the Samuel Rogers' sale in 1856 (see Appendix III). Rogers, known as the 'banker-poet', was one of the great society figures of the early nineteenth century. Born in 1763 to a Dissenting background, by the age of twenty one he had become a partner in his father's bank but preferred to follow more literary aspirations and turned to writing poetry full time after his father's death in 1788. His large wealth, estimated at five thousand pounds per annum in 1788, gave him entrée to literary and aristocratic circles. In addition to his literary activities Rogers was an avid art collector. The sale of his art collection in 1856 was a notable society event of the Season. Rogers was a self-appointed 'dictator of English Letters' and held famous literary breakfasts at his home in St James's, Piccadilly.<sup>282</sup> Famed for his caustic wit, he hero-worshipped men of action such as his near neighbour Sir Francis Burdett.<sup>283</sup> His collection consisted mainly of Old Masters of the Italian and English schools, especially the Italian primitives, and eighteenth-century painters such as Joshua Reynolds and Henry Fuseli.<sup>284</sup> In 1816 he began collecting paintings, drawings and engravings, Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities, sculptures, Greek vases, coins and furniture and amassed an enormous library. As a patron he helped artists with their

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<sup>281</sup> Gere and Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors*, pp. 96, 99.

<sup>282</sup> Alexander Dyce, Morchard Bishop, eds., *Recollections of The Table Talk of Samuel Rogers* (Kansas: University of Kansas, 1953), p. xiii.

<sup>283</sup> Rogers lived at 22 St James's Place, the Burdetts at No.23.

<sup>284</sup> Frank Herrmann, *The Great Collectors: A Documentary Chrystomony* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972 ), p. 252.

finances, introduced them to other collectors and reconciled their quarrels, although the artist C. R. Leslie regretted that he did not do more, he was: 'too quiet to exercise the influence he should have maintained among patrons of art'.<sup>285</sup> In fact Macleod suggests that middle-class patrons rarely introduced artists to rich patrons or lent them money as aristocratic eighteenth-century patrons would have done.<sup>286</sup> Nevertheless, Rogers tried to model himself on aristocratic patterns in other ways, such as opening his house to the public after two o'clock in the afternoon by written application. Old Masters were on display in the drawing room while his modern English collection hung in the library, dining rooms and bedrooms.<sup>287</sup>

Cultural geographers have recognised that vision, visual representation and 'the gaze', that is, looking and observing, are positioned and inherently spatial in nature.<sup>288</sup> The location of artworks acted as propaganda for connoisseurship; certain spaces in a house were deemed appropriate for certain pictures which were considered to best convey the status of their owner. Thus we have the more costly Old Masters located in the more public rooms, the less valuable works located in the more private apartments. Typically they conveyed ideas of 'good taste' as defined by aristocratic male patrons who looked to such bodies as the Royal Academy for confirmation.<sup>289</sup> Rogers used his art collection to confirm himself as a man of 'taste' and his use of aristocratic practices in showing his collection reinforced his self-image as a man of culture. His house was situated at 22 St. James's Place, Green Park, an area dominated by the Season, the gentleman's club and other activities enjoyed by the man about town or flaneur.<sup>290</sup> That the house made an impression upon the visitor is evident. Byron, who later fell out with Rogers, described it in his diary:

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<sup>285</sup> Tom Taylor, *Autobiographical Recollections by the Late Charles Robert Leslie, RA*, 2 vols. (London:1860), I, p. 234, quoted in Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 38.

<sup>286</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 40.

<sup>287</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 468.

<sup>288</sup> Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 25.

<sup>289</sup> Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 26.

<sup>290</sup> Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 6.

if you enter his house – his drawing room – his library - you, of yourself say, this is not the dwelling of a common mind. There is not a gem, a coin, a book, thrown aside in his chimneypiece, his sofa, his table, that does not bespeak an almost fastidious elegance in the possessor.<sup>291</sup>

Doubtless this would have been an impression that Rogers would have been seeking to achieve in the placement of these objects, the careless item 'thrown aside' would have been nothing of the kind.

The art critic Anna Jameson also described the interior of his house in her *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London* (1844). She described several of the pictures subsequently bought by Burdett Coutts and their locations within the house.<sup>292</sup> Jameson used her description of these collections as a guide to 'good taste'. She laid down the principles by which a good collection should be formed:

it cannot be done easily, it cannot be done in a hurry. It requires a profound knowledge of the immutable principles on which high art is founded; and not merely the perception of truth and beauty, but a certainty of tact and judgement, which is perfectly independent of the variation of fashion, or the completion of vanity. To choose, not that which appears beautiful now, tempting to the fancy, new to the eye, coveted by others but that which is crowned with perennial beauty, sanctified by ages of fame, beyond the power of fashion or caprice, or change of time or place, to take anything from its intrinsic merit and value - that is the difficulty.<sup>293</sup>

Jameson goes on to advise on the pitfalls of arrangement in a private collection and the importance of 'harmony in variety': 'Mr Rogers has hung Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Laughing Girl* close to that splendid vivid sketch of Tintoretto...and Sir Joshua stands it bravely...but anything else painted in the last fifty years would look like chalk and brick dust beside it'.

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<sup>291</sup> Quoted by Anna Jameson, 'The House of Samuel Rogers' in *A Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London*, 1844, quoted in Herrmann, *The Great Collectors*, p. 249.

<sup>292</sup> *The Athenaeum* (29 December 1855).

<sup>293</sup> Anna Jameson in Herrmann, *The Great Collectors*, p. 249.

Jameson finds Rogers' collection to be a perfect example of 'exquisite taste and good sense - the same symmetry of mind...everywhere the graceful and elevated prevail - everywhere the feeling of harmonious beauty; simplicity polished into consummate elegance, pathos which stops short of pain'. In describing the locations of Rogers' paintings therefore, Jameson is producing a lesson in taste for the middle-class reader. It is hardly surprising that such standards of 'taste' could be a minefield for the unwary and unconfident. Increasingly middle-class patrons rejected 'high art' which required education, travel and extensive leisure time to appreciate fully.<sup>294</sup>

Rogers had placed his small Raphael (fig. 12, then known as *Christ on the Mount of Olives*) above his writing table in the dining room. Also by the writing table was another subsequent purchase by Burdett Coutts, *The Mill* (untraced), by Claude.<sup>295</sup> Close by was a sketch by Tintoretto for his painting *The Miracle of the Slave* (c. 1548, untraced), and on the wall facing the fireplace a study for *Mary Magdalene anointing the Saviour's Feet* (untraced). All these Old Masters, valuable and sought after works provided clear evidence of Roger's taste and refinement to guests invited to sit at his table. In the library were more modern works, a Turner, the Wilkie and the Reynolds' painting, *Cupid and Psyche* (fig.13, private collection) was over the fireplace in the same room.<sup>296</sup> The pictures by Thomas Stothard subsequently purchased by Burdett Coutts were displayed in a cabinet in the drawing room. Although Rogers was in the fortunate position of being able to devote himself to literary pursuits from the age of twenty five he does not seem to have been able to shake off the description of 'banker-poet' which seems to have followed him throughout his life despite adopting all

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<sup>294</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 62.

<sup>295</sup> The painting is No 11 in the *Liber Veritatis*. Acquired at Samuel Rogers' sale by J. G. Fordham and afterwards purchased from him for Burdett Coutts by dealers E. W. Radclyffe. CON. The octagonal shape and dimensions of this painting correspond to a painting sold at Christie's on November 29 1968, whereabouts unknown. The provenance renders it not the *The Mill* currently in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

<sup>296</sup> Probably the Turner acquired by Burdett Coutts at the Rogers' sale for £182.14. Described as 'sea piece, gale coming on' in the 1856 catalogue the whereabouts of this painting is unknown and no Turner sea piece now in existence fits the description. It has also suggested that it might be the Turner known as *A Storm*, an oil painting in the collection of Rogers' sister Sarah, Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977; rev. ed.1984), p.312.

the signifiers of the aristocrat.<sup>297</sup> Examples of fine art were often taken for granted as essential evidence of taste within the home of a gentleman, the high quality of Rogers collection left the visitor in no doubt that this was someone of fine taste and judgement; he was using his collection to aid in the construct of an image of himself that he wished to project, as Bourdieu would identify it, to fashion his own identity using signifiers of class and taste.<sup>298</sup>

In his collecting practice Rogers does not seem to have been overly concerned with the dictates of fashion and was reputedly never known to have paid more than two hundred and fifty pounds for a picture or object.<sup>299</sup> His sale at Christie's lasted twenty days during April and May 1856 and realised £45,188, or over £3,500,000 today.<sup>300</sup> Burdett Coutts's own purchases at the sale amounted to £6,218 or approximately £500,000 in today's values.<sup>301</sup> They included works by eighteenth-century masters such as Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds and also Old Masters such as Ludovico Carracci, Murillo, Tintoretto, Veronese, Domenichino, Poussin, Guercino and Raphael (see Appendix III). More modern purchases included Turner, Wilkie and Stothard.<sup>302</sup> Interestingly she bought no examples of the early Italian schools, of which Rogers was a pioneer collector and which were by then becoming more popular.<sup>303</sup> The Carracci, Murillo, Poussin and Domenichino were popular during the middle years of the century, while Raphael had never been out of fashion.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> G. H. Powell, *Reminiscences and Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers, Banker, Poet and Patron of the Arts* (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1903), p. xii.

<sup>298</sup> Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 290.

<sup>299</sup> Herrmann, *The Great Collectors*, p. 252.

<sup>300</sup> Based upon figures compiled by Jim O'Donaghue, Louise Couldry and Graham Allen, *Consumer Price Inflation since 1750* (Office of National Statistics and the House of Commons Library, 2003).

<sup>301</sup> O'Donaghue et al, *Consumer Price Inflation*, passim.

<sup>302</sup> Burdett Coutts's Sale, Christie's Catalogue, 4 May 1922.

<sup>303</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, pp. 126-131.

<sup>304</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, pp. 417, 418.



Samuel Rogers left ten paintings by Reynolds, of which nine were sold at the auction in 1856. Burdett Coutts purchased three of these, *Cupid and Psyche* (before 1788), *The Mob Cap*, c.1780s (fig.14, private collection) and *Girl Sketching*, 1780/82 (fig. 15, untraced).<sup>305</sup> She also owned a further four paintings by Reynolds, and a copy of his painting *Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse* and *Portrait of an Officer* (both untraced), attributed to the School of Reynolds. A painting called *The Infant Neptune* was attributed to Reynolds in the Christie's auction catalogue of May 1922 and sold as such (Lot 69), described as previously being in the collection of Mrs. Otway Cave, Burdett Coutts's aunt. A sketch referred to as *Sleeping Cupid* (untraced), a preparatory drawing for *Cupid & Psyche*, was also owned by Burdett Coutts.<sup>306</sup>

Of the seventeen pictures acquired by Burdett Coutts at the Rogers' sale, the most notable painting was Raphael's *Christ on the Mount of Olives (The Agony in the Garden)*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). This small picture, an early work by the artist, was distinguished by reliable provenance. It had been originally part of a predella of an altarpiece painted in 1505 for the nuns of St Anthony at Perugia and subsequently purchased by Queen Christina of Sweden in 1663.<sup>307</sup> Originally in the collection of Cardinal Azzolini, it gradually passed into the hands of the Duc d'Orleans and was part of his great sale in 1798 when Samuel Rogers purchased it from Lord Seldon.<sup>308</sup> The pioneering German art historian Gustav Waagen (1797-1868) commented on the painting as part of his three volume survey *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* (1854-57). He noted its poor condition: 'much injured by cleaning and repairing', and also suggested that its 'defects of drawing' indicated that it only the composition could be reliably ascribed to the artist and that the execution

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<sup>305</sup> For provenance and further information see David Mannings, *Joshua Reynolds. A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings*, 2 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000 ), I, pp. 279, 346, 522, 523, 539.

<sup>306</sup> According to Osborne, this was purchased through the dealer Radclyffe for £15.15s on 23 November 1857, but Mannings states that the provenance is 'sold, Goodison, Christies, April 15 1851, bought White; sold White, Christies, 18 April 1868, bought Wornell, Angela Burdett Coutts by 1900', Mannings, *Joshua Reynolds*, I p. 52.

<sup>307</sup> Gustav Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols. (John Murray, 1854), II, p. 76.

<sup>308</sup> The other parts consist of *St Francis and St Anthony* (Dulwich Art Gallery), the *Pieta* (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston) and *Procession to Calvary* (National Gallery, London). The main part of the altarpiece, known as the *Colonna Altarpiece*, is also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

was probably the work of assistants.<sup>309</sup> Nevertheless, Raphael was one of the few artists who had remained immune to the vagaries of fashion and it would obviously have been something of a coup to acquire such a picture for a private collection.<sup>310</sup> Certainly Burdett Coutts did appear to have been proud of this painting and gave an engraving of it to her friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Gladstone, as a New Year's gift in 1864: 'My Dear Chancellor', she wrote:

I send and Beg Mrs. Gladstone best wishes for 1865, the engraving of my little Raphael which will I hope reach you tomorrow - I have not traced whether or no the picture is engraved otherwise but these were done by Mr. Rogers himself to whom the picture belonged and I bought the engravings with the picture at his sale.<sup>311</sup>

Although Burdett Coutts clashed with Gladstone on a number of issues, including the control of her overseas bishoprics, she regarded him as a friend.<sup>312</sup> According to Edna Healey she attempted to confide in him during the controversy following the announcement of her marriage only for Gladstone to turn aside: '...the issue of the conversation might give us both unnecessary pain, without any prospect of compensating advantage'.<sup>313</sup> He was also the instigator of her peerage.<sup>314</sup> The gift was well chosen. Gladstone was a noted collector with a good knowledge and appreciation of early Italian art; an entry in his diary for 1850 during a trip to Italy demonstrates his ability to distinguish between a genuine early Raphael and a fake: 'the style has none of that almost divine elation which belongs to his earlier works; nor did the execution seem to me like that of his

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<sup>309</sup> Waagen, *Treasures*, II, p. 76.

<sup>310</sup> In 1884 the British Government paid £70,000 for Raphael's *Asidei Madonna* for the National Gallery. Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 178.

<sup>311</sup> Letter from Burdett Coutts to William Gladstone dated 31 December 1864, Gladstone Papers BL 44404.

<sup>312</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 58.

<sup>313</sup> Gladstone Papers British Library, p. 201 cited in Healey, *Coutts*, p. 368.

<sup>314</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 156.

later ones'.<sup>315</sup> Burdett Coutts was adept at using influential friends to get her own way as my subsequent discussion on copyright later in this chapter will demonstrate. Although it would be unfair to suggest that she maintained good relations with people for purely cynical reasons arguably the exchange of such a gift would have helped to maintain good relations with such an important and influential politician. Burdett Coutts is careful to stress the provenance of the picture in her letter and the use of the disparaging and faux modest 'my little Raphael' would have done nothing to distract from the huge kudos Burdett Coutts would have acquired from having a work by this artist. The significance would not have been lost on the recipient; it would have been a constant reminder of her status, wealth and taste.

Burdett Coutts also acquired a painting by Murillo, an extremely popular artist during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and generally regarded as something of an 'honorary Italian', an exception to the pre-Victorian prejudice against the 'fleshy school of painting', arguably because of the sentimental quality of his work.<sup>316</sup> The vogue for Murillo began in the 1750s and achieved its apogee during the Napoleonic Wars and again in the 1830s-1860s, although the demand for his work remained high for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>317</sup> In addition to the Murillos purchased at the 1856 sale, Burdett Coutts subsequently acquired two others, a *Head of St John the Baptist* (untraced, Leigh Court Sale 1884), and *St John* (untraced). Other acquisitions included works by Rembrandt, Poussin and Claude. All these artists were unpopular at the time of the sale, their prices remaining relatively low until the 1880s. All had been affected by the mistrust attached to the Old Master market. Guercino's popularity had also waned by the mid nineteenth century. However, Burdett Coutts bought *Mother and Child*, 1614 (fig. 16, private collection), by Guercino (1591-1666) - now known as *Madonna of the Sparrow* - and later went on to acquire three more works by this artist, *St Joseph and the Angel* (untraced, Leigh Court Sale 1884),

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<sup>315</sup> Marcia Pointon, 'W. E. Gladstone as an Art Patron and Collector' in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 19 (September 1975), p. 73.

<sup>316</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 132.

<sup>317</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 132.

*Vision of St Francis* (untraced) and *A Sacrifice* (untraced, Hamilton Palace Sale, 1882). In purchasing works by Guercino Burdett Coutts was acquiring work by an artist long associated with English collections.<sup>318</sup> His drawings had been highly prized during the seventeenth century and invariably found in the cabinets of almost every great collection.<sup>319</sup> Following on from the Napoleonic Wars masterpieces from every phase of his work appeared in Britain including the *Madonna of the Sparrow* and there was an impeccable provenance for this painting. Originally in the Borghese Collection in Rome it was acquired in 1799-1800 by William Young Ottley.<sup>320</sup> He offered it for sale in 1801 and it was subsequently sold from the Morland Collection in 1820 when Rogers bought it.<sup>321</sup> Inevitably, a backlash resulted in a revulsion against the whole Bolognese School. In 1853 Ruskin referred to the 'vile' Guercino in his *Academy Notes* although fourteen pictures by the artist were exhibited at the Art Treasures Exhibition in Manchester in 1857.<sup>322</sup> Burdett Coutts evidently felt secure enough to ignore the artist's fall from grace, continuing to purchase his paintings at major auctions.

The *Madonna of the Sparrow* portrays the Virgin and Christ child, with mother and child gazing at a small bird, a symbol of the passion, perched on the Virgin's finger. This popular subject seems to have been a favourite with Burdett Coutts as she owned several copies of similar works by Raphael and other Old Masters (Appendix I). Indeed, as Angela Burdett Coutts was a committed Christian, it is unsurprising to find that there were at least thirty three pictures with a religious theme in her collection. Few of her paintings with a religious subject are by contemporary artists and she certainly did not seem to share the same dislike of Catholicism as that held by her friend Dickens, who believed that the instigator of most

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<sup>318</sup> Michael Helston, *Guercino in Britain: Paintings in British Collections* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1991), p. 4.

<sup>319</sup> Helston, *Guercino*, p. 4

<sup>320</sup> Helston, *Guercino*, p. 188.

<sup>321</sup> Helston, *Guercino*, p. 188.

<sup>322</sup> A. Cooke and A. Wedderburn, *Academy Notes*, IV, 1853 (Vol. XIV, 1903), p. 157 quoted Helston, *Guercino*, p. 8.

of the ugliness in Italian painting was the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>323</sup> However, Burdett Coutts was still very aware of her Protestantism as my discussion on church patronage (Chapter Four) will demonstrate. On a trip to Rome in 1894 Burdett Coutts wrote of: 'The immortal buildings which fill a large page of the world's history...perhaps most interesting is the small Pyramid raised in honour of the Sun...perhaps the next most interesting relic is the Church where Luther celebrated mass and abjured its doctrines and created Protestantism'.<sup>324</sup> The possession of a work entitled *Monkeys as Monks* by David Teniers might imply some cynicism toward the Roman Catholic Church although animal humour in itself might have been the main attraction.

Burdett Coutts also bought Rembrandt's *Forest Scene* (untraced). Rembrandt had been widely collected in the early years of the nineteenth century, especially by the Prince Regent and the banking collectors, Francis Baring, Thomas Hope and John Julius Angerstein but had since fallen in popularity, again a victim of the number of forgeries which came onto the market.<sup>325</sup> This particular etching had apparently been a favourite of Reynolds and was formerly in the collection of Benjamin West who along with Lawrence had championed the artist.<sup>326</sup> It is possible that it was this connection with Reynolds that prompted the purchase, given her grandfather's friendship Reynolds. That the provenance was well-known would doubtless have been reassuring to Burdett Coutts.

According to Reitlinger, prior to the Roger's sale there had been little demand for the sixteenth century Venetian school.<sup>327</sup> In fact, Veronese, Titian and Tintoretto had all been attacked by Reynolds in his *Discourse* of December 1771; he had vilified the entire sixteenth-century Venetian school for being mere decorators, obsessed with colour, not form. These

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<sup>323</sup> Lindsay Errington, *Social and Religious Themes in English Art 1840-1860* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1984), p. 26.

<sup>324</sup> Letter dated 2 February 1894 from Burdett Coutts to Charles Osborne, Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

<sup>325</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 137.

<sup>326</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 137.

<sup>327</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 462.

artists had also fallen victim to the backlash against the widespread forgery of Old Masters, the impure pigments used and the difficulty of discerning school pieces from works by the masters.<sup>328</sup> Thus Burdett Coutts was able to buy Veronese's study for *Mary Magdalene Anointing the Saviour's Feet* for the comparatively small price of £39.9s.<sup>329</sup> Similarly Reynolds had attacked Tintoretto and even Ruskin's championship of him in *Modern Painters II* in 1846, had done little to revive his fortunes.<sup>330</sup> Burdett Coutts's acquisition of these Old Masters put her firmly in the framework of the aristocratic art collector who was confident enough to buy artists who had fallen from popular favour and to do it in the most public of arenas.

Similarly Burdett Coutts acquired works by more modern Old Masters. She acquired two pictures, *A Market Cart* (untraced), and *The Drinking Place* (untraced), by Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), and owned another work by this artist, *Portrait of a Gentleman* (Parham House, West Sussex, fig.17). Gainsborough's landscapes continually outsold his portraits which continued to make very little money until the Northwick Sale of 1859. Reitlinger argues that the eighteenth-century revival was prompted by a sentimental reappraisal of artists with whom living contact was now gone, and credits both the Rogers and the Northwick sales as key elements in this reappraisal as both these collectors had actually known these artists, a direct link with the past.<sup>331</sup> Certainly the interest of major collectors such as the Rothschilds also contributed to a revived interest in eighteenth-century artists such as Gainsborough, while the sales of several major collections and the consequent dangers of 'English' works of art being exported, particularly to the United States, reawakened an interest in such paintings as part of a newly perceived national heritage and nationalism.<sup>332</sup> Representatives of the National Gallery were often in

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<sup>328</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 182.

<sup>329</sup> This title was the subject of three pictures by Veronese; one is Turin, one in Brera and the third in the Louvre. G. Knox, 'The Paintings of Mario and Sebastiano Ricci for Consol Smith', *Apollo Magazine* (September 1994), p. 21.

<sup>330</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 127.

<sup>331</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 182.

<sup>332</sup> Stefan Muthesius, 'Periodisation According to Authenticity, or Creating Vigorous Borderlines in

attendance at sales from the 1850s onwards as they sought to purchase suitable paintings for the nations' collection.<sup>333</sup>

Burdett Coutts's other purchases at the Rogers' sale were also of late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century origin (see Appendix III); Richard Wilson's *An Italian Landscape*, (untraced), underlines the decline in the reputations of the others. She bought six pictures by Thomas Stothard (1755-1834). Stothard had been one of the most popular and successful artists of that period and was highly regarded by other artists, *Fete Champetre* contains four subjects engraved in Rogers' poems.<sup>334</sup> According to C. R. Leslie, Stothard's popularity was not shared by the aristocracy however who 'knew little and cared less' for him.<sup>335</sup> Evidently, Burdett Coutts did not share this disdain for in addition to the pictures she bought at the Rogers sale she also owned other pictures by Stoddart. It is likely that the subject matter and the associations with Rogers would have been the main attraction for her.

Of the other pictures acquired, *Spanish Nurse and Child*, 1824 (untraced), by David Wilkie (1785-1841) was one of his later works, painted after his extensive travels in Europe during the 1820s.<sup>336</sup> Burdett Coutts also owned two others works by Wilkie, original sketches for two of his most famous works, *Rent Day* (1817) and *The Blind Fiddler* (1806) (see Appendix I). His popularity had also declined after his death and the sketches in Burdett Coutts's collection were both acquired for relatively modest sums at the Marquis of Normanby sale in 1886 (Appendix VII). The purchase of so many works by artists who had fallen from favour indicates a confident collector. While it is likely that it was the strong family

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Nineteenth-Century Architectural History', *National Identities*, vol. 8, No.3 (September 2006), pp. 277-286.

<sup>333</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 127.

<sup>334</sup> Burdett Coutts also bought all the steel plates or blocks engraved or cut after Stothard for a proposed illustrated version of Rogers' works, Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>335</sup> Leslie, *Autobiographical Recollections*, p. 130.

<sup>336</sup> David Blayney Brown, *David Wilkie. Drawings and Sketches in the Ashmolean Museum: A Catalogue* (Morton Morris & Co, 1985), p. 12.

connection with Reynolds that prompted her purchase at the Rogers' sale it also shows that she was unafraid to purchase pictures by more recent artists who were no longer sought after. In this she could be seen as a leader of taste, indeed Gerald Reitlinger credited the 1856 sale of Rogers' paintings as the turning point in the fortunes of Reynolds and eighteenth century artists; he states that as Miss Angela Burdett Coutts 'she had virtually started the entire eighteenth-century revival on that memorable day'.<sup>337</sup> As already noted, although Burdett Coutts did not personally bid at this sale, the identity of the buyer would not have been a secret for long. In his diary for 10 May 1856 Henry Crabb Robinson recorded that:

I dined again at Miss Coutts... An interesting subject to talk on was the sale of Rogers' pictures, of which Miss Coutts has been a very large purchaser; and she gains credit by the good taste she showed in her selection. Some half dozen of my favourites were there, *The Mob-Capped Girl*, *The Lady Sketching*, the *Cupid and Psyche* ... The Raphael *Christ In the Garden*, the Paul Veronese *Festival*. There would be no end should I go on... The marble *Cupid and Psyche* Miss Denman had some idea of buying but she rejoiced when she heard that the *Cupid* had fetched £115 and the *Psyche* £125! <sup>338</sup>

As I have noted the seemingly strong provenance of many of the Old Masters in Roger's collection would have been reassuring to potential buyers and Burdett Coutts could therefore have purchased with some high degree of confidence, rather than relying too strongly on the word of a dealer. As Robinson observed, her purchases marked her out as a person of 'taste'.<sup>339</sup>

Although not great in number, French Old Masters were also well represented in Burdett Coutts's collection. In addition to a version of *The Mill* (untraced), by Claude Lorraine there are three works by Poussin and two seventeenth-century portraits; one by Pierre Mignard of the *Marquise de Sevigné* (untraced), and the other of the *Duc D'Anjou and his Governess*

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<sup>337</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 193.

<sup>338</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>339</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.



attributed to Nicolas de Largilliere (untraced, fig. 18).<sup>340</sup> There are also several by sixteenth and seventeenth-century Flemish artists - Kamper, Holbein and Hobbema, Jan Brueghel, Maes, Netscher Van Ostade, Schambroek, Van Dyck, Teniers, Mierevelt, Schill, Both, Hals, Van Heemskirk, De Hoogh and Van der Poel (Appendix I). These reflect the interests of the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, when Dutch seventeenth-century genre and landscape pictures became more popular.<sup>341</sup> Burdett Coutts's purchases at auction during the 1870s seem to have been largely at the Masquerier sale where she bought pictures by him as well as a Hoppner and a Raeburn (Appendix VII).

Burdett Coutts's enthusiasm for the Dutch and Flemish schools may also have been a legacy of the early nineteenth century when their popularity was boosted by a feeling of kinship with other Protestant states at a time when Napoleon threatened Europe.<sup>342</sup> George IV was a great collector and Hobbema, Ruysdael, Cuyp and other Dutch painters were far more popular in England than elsewhere in Europe.<sup>343</sup> There was little place for early Flemish works, however, in the typical mid-Victorian collection.<sup>344</sup> When Prince Albert's relative Prince Ludwig Kraft-Ernest of Oetingen-Wallerstein was compelled to sell his collection of early Flemish works in 1848, he sent them to London on Albert's advice and they were put on view at Kensington Palace, Waagen compiling the catalogue.<sup>345</sup> There were no purchasers however, and Prince Albert acquired the entire collection himself.<sup>346</sup> According to Reitlinger, the increase in popularity of Rembrandt and the entire Dutch

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<sup>340</sup> Now thought to be a portrait of the Duchesse de Ventadour and the Duc de Bretagne by Francois de Troy. Jean Cailleux 'Some Family and Group Portraits by Francois de Troy (1645-17)', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 113, No. 817 (April 1971), pp. i-xviii.

<sup>341</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 137.

<sup>342</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 130.

<sup>343</sup> John Steegman, *Victorian Taste: A Study of the Arts and Architecture from 1830-1870* (London: Century in Association with the National Trust, 1970), p. 57.

<sup>344</sup> Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, p. 60.

<sup>345</sup> Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, p. 60.

<sup>346</sup> Albert also purchased work of the early Italian schools. After his death many of these pictures were presented to the National Gallery, Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, pp. 60, 61. .

school was signalled in 1865 when the Duc de Morny sold the portrait of *Herman Doomer the Gilder* for £6,200.<sup>347</sup> The market took another leap when Lord Hertford bought the *Laughing Cavalier* for £2,040 that same year, although it was only after 1874 when the Berlin Museum acquired some first class examples of Dutch art that the market really took off.<sup>348</sup> Burdett Coutts would have been sixty then. She had already acquired several examples of Flemish and Dutch art and therefore would have been unlikely to have been influenced merely by fashion. Burdett Coutts could have purchased from the Dutch school at any time, but there is every chance that given her usual criteria for buying – sentimental attachment, family associations, pleasure in subject matter, they could equally have been bought at a time when they were unpopular and their prices low, just as she purchased Reynolds at the Rogers' sale in 1856.

There is no way of discerning the degree to which John Ruskin's writing influenced Burdett Coutts's collecting practice. Certainly her collection contained works by artists which would not have impressed him. Dismissive of Claude, his feelings on works by Holbein and Poussin were mixed; he firmly disliked Dutch landscape of which he wrote that 'there is no feeling of true humanity or beauty' and had a real dislike of Teniers.<sup>349</sup> Certainly a title such as *Monkeys as Monks*, would tend to lend weight to Ruskin's poor view of the artist and his level of humour.<sup>350</sup> Although Van Dyck and Rubens were praised for their treatment of love, the Dutch 'banished all Deity from the earth' and were condemned for their lack of spirituality.<sup>351</sup> Some of Angela Burdett Coutts's Italian pictures would also not have found favour with the critic as he also intensely disliked the work of Domenichino and the

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<sup>347</sup> Rubens remained unpopular. English buyers were particularly wary of misattribution. Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 137.

<sup>348</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 137.

<sup>349</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 5 vols, (London: Smith, Elder, 1873, rev. edn., 1888), Part IX, V, pp. 281-286.

<sup>350</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, V, p. 252.

<sup>351</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, V, p. 264.

Carraccis.<sup>352</sup> It is possible that Burdett Coutts would have respected Ruskin's views but ignored them much in the same way that Charles Osborne states in his biographical notes in the British Library, that she was aware of Darwin's views but apparently never read them and certainly never agreed with them.<sup>353</sup> Arguably by the time Burdett Coutts was collecting she felt sufficiently confident in her own taste to ignore him.

Of the other notable pictures in her collection, several by Fuseli stand out. Five pictures were in the 1922 auction: *Ariel* (fig. 19), *Puck* (fig. 20), *Queen Mab* (fig. 21), *Milton being taught to Read by His Mother* (fig. 22), and the *Portrait of Mrs. Otway Cave* (fig. 23). It is not known how Burdett Coutts acquired the portrait of her aunt, *Mrs. Otway Cave*, 1820-25 (private collection), but it is likely that *Puck* (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington), came via the Duchess of St Albans.<sup>354</sup> Burdett Coutts inherited *The Gryphon* (untraced), and *Milton Being taught to read by his Mother* 1790-95 (Hotel Euler, Basel), from her father, Sir Francis. The source of *Falstaff in the Laundry Basket* 1792 (fig. 24, Zurich Kunsthaus), *Mrs Page* (fig. 25) and *A Scene from Macbeth* (untraced) are unknown. *Eurphrosyne* (fig. 26 Heidelberg, Kurpfälzisches Museum der Stadt Heidelberg) was originally purchased by Thomas Coutts. Given the family connections with this artist it is tempting to believe that there might have been more in her collection. We also know that she acquired several paintings as gifts from her favourite artists, primarily Samuel Hodges, Edwin Long, and Marshal Claxton (Appendix II) as well as those of family friends. One of her largest sources of paintings however, is again that of a family friend, John James Masquerier. Osborne said that Burdett Coutts was 'well aware that Masquerier was not a fine painter but his pictures from associations with them were very much admired'.<sup>355</sup> Accordingly, one of her most-prized pictures was that of Masquerier's portrait of her friend, the novelist Sir Horace Smith (1779-1849), again, according to Osborne, from its associations, 'not as a fine painting in its own

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<sup>352</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, VI, p. 325.

<sup>353</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>354</sup> See J. Knowles, *The Life and Writing of Henry Fuseli Esq.*, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), I, p. 25, for letter from Harriet Coutts to Fuseli giving thanks for *Puck*.

<sup>355</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

right'.<sup>356</sup> Masquerier had been a friend of Burdett Coutts's father, so an emotional link to the artist was already established. This is a typical example of Burdett Coutts's very personal collecting practice, the strong importance of association for her in both artist and subject matter.

## Portraiture

The ethereal and the ascetic played no part in her life. She had little knowledge of art, sharing the defect of many other Victorians.<sup>357</sup>

In 1854 when considering the subject of portraiture and a possible National Exhibition of Scottish Portraiture Thomas Carlyle discussed the importance of the portrait.<sup>358</sup> He argued that the obtaining of a portrait, even if indifferent, was of prime importance to the historian.<sup>359</sup> A portrait gave real and important insight into a man; 'a lighted candle' which by extension enabled the onlooker to 'read the face' and attempt an interpretation of what lay beneath. This ability rendered the subject more human and capable of being more closely understood.<sup>360</sup> Even possession of a man's letters, or knowledge of his actions alone, did not form as good an indication of his character as the ability to see his likeness.<sup>361</sup> Carlyle stressed the importance of the portrait not just for an historian in a narrow sense, but for everybody, 'all men, just in proportion as they are, 'Historians' (which every mortal is who has a memory and attractions and possessions in the Past)'.<sup>362</sup> The value of the portrait was, as a result, more than its artistic value and it appealed to a 'far deeper and

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<sup>356</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>357</sup> 'By One Who Knew Her Well', probably Osborne, in *Blackwoods Magazine*, 1907.

<sup>358</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'Portrait of a National Exhibition of Scottish Portraits', 1854 in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1877), p. 130.

<sup>359</sup> Carlyle, 'Portrait', p. 130.

<sup>360</sup> Carlyle, 'Portrait', p. 130.

<sup>361</sup> Carlyle, 'Portrait', p. 130.

<sup>362</sup> Carlyle, 'Portrait', p. 130.

more universal principle in human nature than the love of Pictures is'.<sup>363</sup> Such sentiments would have found an immediate response in Burdett Coutts, who seemed to have a particular regard and even need for portraits, especially in the case of family and friends. This was a characteristic she shared with her grandfather, Thomas Coutts. Arguably its greatest manifestation was in the large number of portraits of her father in her possession, but many more were of family, friends and national heroes. Indeed, most of the pictures which Burdett Coutts purchased at auction were portraits and she commissioned a large number, at least twenty seven out of her forty one known commissions (see Appendix IV).

Portraiture had largely sustained the British art market for many centuries, but in the 1870s a cult of the portrait developed and, as a consequence, a revival of the fortunes of the eighteenth-century masters.<sup>364</sup> This interest in aspects of the human body also coincided with the mid-century interest in phrenology and physiognomy as a key to identifying a person's personality as evidenced by their physical appearance.<sup>365</sup> According to Susan Stewart, in her discussion of the significance of the portrait, because the body in a portrait is often invisible, the face becomes "gigantic" with meaning and significance. The face becomes a text, a space to be read and interpreted in order to exist.<sup>366</sup> The act of apprehending the face's image becomes a mode of possession; the face then belongs to the other.<sup>367</sup> Portraits were also a powerful link to the past. As Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction*, 1979) suggests, such signifiers remind the viewer of their possessors aristocratic, royal and artistic associations, in this case reinforcing Burdett Coutts's claim to nobility through family connections and her family's rise to greatness.

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<sup>363</sup> Carlyle, 'Portrait', p. 130.

<sup>364</sup> Brian Allen, *The British Portrait 1660-1960* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collector's Club, 1990), p. 350.

<sup>365</sup> John Van Wyke, 'The History of Phrenology' on [www.victorianweb.org/science/phrenology/intro.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/science/phrenology/intro.html) accessed 3 August 2011.

<sup>366</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, The Gigantic, The Souvenir, The Collector* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 126.

<sup>367</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 126.

In order to display such collections some collectors revived the portrait gallery; a traditional means of display found in great houses of the seventeenth century.<sup>368</sup> Drawing upon these elite associations Disraeli formed a 'Gallery of Friendship' at Hughenden to display those he had known and loved during the course of his life whilst Sir Robert Peel devised a 'Gallery of Statesmen' at his country seat of Drayton Manor.<sup>369</sup> As previously noted, Burdett Coutts's own gallery was almost entirely devoted to works by Reynolds, a close friend of her grandfather and again such a device would have emphasised her own elite associations.<sup>370</sup> In addition to her acquisitions at the Rogers' sale, Burdett Coutts owned Reynolds's *Portrait of Dr John Armstrong*, 1767 (Art Gallery of South Australia, fig.27).<sup>371</sup> Burdett Coutts also owned Reynolds's *Portrait of John 'Fyshe' Crauford*, 1789 (private collection, fig.28), another friend of Thomas Coutts,<sup>372</sup> and the *Portrait of Sir Hector Munro*, 1785 (private collection).<sup>373</sup> According to Charles Osborne, the *Portrait of James Coutts*, 1771-1773 (untraced, fig. 29), was purchased by Burdett Coutts from Lady Stuart of Allanbank, the widowed daughter-in-law of James Coutts's daughter, in 1863.<sup>374</sup> It is possible that given his close association with Reynolds, Thomas Coutts may have known Angelica Kauffman prior to his visit to Rome in 1791 when he commissioned her to paint his daughters as *The Three Graces* (fig. 30, Earl

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<sup>368</sup> Oliver Millar, 'Portraiture and the Country House' in Gervase Jackson ed., *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, National Gallery of Art Washington, 1985), p. 31.

<sup>369</sup> Millar, 'Portraiture', p. 31.

<sup>370</sup> *The Times* (29 June 1920), p. 14.

<sup>371</sup> John Armstrong (1709-79). A friend of Fuseli he may also have been a friend or acquaintance of Thomas Coutts. Mannings, *Joshua Reynolds*, p. 65. There are two versions of this painting, one was in the collection of Coutts's friend Caleb Whitefoord and in the 1931 auction catalogue of Thomas Harris, an engraving 'from the original in the possession of Mr. Coutts' is mentioned.

<sup>372</sup> One of two pictures bought by Clive Pearson for Parham House, West Sussex, at the Burdett Coutts sale, and still at Parham. Records show that the picture originally cost ten guineas and a payment was transferred from Crauford's account at Coutts & Co on 15 July 1789. Mannings, *Joshua Reynolds*, I, p. 151.

<sup>373</sup> Sir Hector Munro (1726-1805), soldier and M.P and possible Scottish connection with Thomas Coutts.

<sup>374</sup> CON. The purchase prize, five hundred pounds, was used to provide the Stuart Prize, an annual prize for Scottish art students, was duly endowed and remains in existence today.

of Harrowby).<sup>375</sup> Although Kauffman as a woman was believed to have a special sympathy for female subjects, a visit to her studio was considered essential for every fashionable visitor to Rome and Coutts would have been well aware of following in this elite fashion when commissioning a portrait of his daughters by her.<sup>376</sup> The sisters are depicted in a classical setting, ostensibly the grounds of the Villa Borghese: 'where the...sisters used to love to go frequently with their father and mother'.<sup>377</sup> Dressed in identical neo-classical dresses they sit on a bench whilst above them a bust of Minerva gazes down at them.<sup>378</sup> Kauffman explored the means of presenting non-commercial and positively charged settings in 'feminine spaces' based on sympathetic non-material values.<sup>379</sup> Little is known of her working practice but it is possible that she used a library of stock poses and could have painted the portrait after the sitters had departed.<sup>380</sup>

The Three Graces, goddesses of love and beauty, were a popular subject for triple portraits of young women and particularly apt in this case as it was the childhood nickname of the three sisters.<sup>381</sup> The subject gave artists an opportunity to portray young women in a setting likely to exemplify the feminine virtues of grace and beauty. The sitters are dressed alike and look alike. There is no attempt to portray their individuality and in this Kauffman seems to have been content to follow the conventional practice in such gendered portraits.<sup>382</sup> The use of a pastoral background, which looks no more than a theatrical backdrop, emphasises

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<sup>375</sup> Coutts was a pallbearer at Reynolds' funeral, E. H. Coleridge, *The Life of Thomas Coutts, Banker*, 2 vols. (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1922), II, p. 63.

<sup>376</sup> Angela Rosenthal, 'Kauffman and Portraiture' in Wendy Wassyng Roworth, ed., *Angelica Kauffman: A Continental Artist in Georgian England*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), pp. 96-99.

<sup>377</sup> Excerpt for January 1791 in workbook of Angelica Kauffman, quoted in Lady Victoria Manners and C. G. Williamson, *Angelica Kauffman RA: Her Life and Her Work* (London: Bodley Head, 1924), p. 159.

<sup>378</sup> Attributed incongruously to Mars in the 1922 Christie's sales catalogue.

<sup>379</sup> Rosenthal in Wassyng Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman*, p. 111.

<sup>380</sup> Rosenthal in Wassyng Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman*, p. 110.

<sup>381</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 28.

<sup>382</sup> Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth Century England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 29-32.

their feminine connection with nature, an attribution emphasised by the flowers at their feet. Although depictions of male sitters would have hinted at their lives in the real world, female sitters were often depicted inhabiting a world of mythology and allegory.<sup>383</sup> In this instance Kauffman has shown the sisters beneath the bust of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Perhaps she was trying to lend a gravitas to her sitters, hoping that wisdom would guide them in their lives, rather than merely hinting at future marriage prospects in depicting the women sacrificing to Hymen, a popular convention in eighteenth century portraits. In every other way the depiction is conventional enough. The dresses are nominally classical but in fact not far removed from contemporary fashion and despite the apparent simplicity of their dress, the flowing fabrics give every indication that these are sitters drawn from the ranks of the leisured classes.

George III's favourite Sir William Beechey was not so favoured by the late nineteenth-century collectors as his contemporaries, Reynolds and Hoppner, but he was well represented in Burdett Coutts's collection with several portraits including one of Harriot Mellon as the Duchess of St Albans, (fig. 31, National Portrait Gallery).<sup>384</sup> Similarly Raeburn had come into his own in the 1790s, when he had painted a number of leading Scottish intellectuals but as with many others, had fallen greatly in favour after his death and remained so until the 1870s.<sup>385</sup> The subjects of these portraits suggest a family interest based upon acquaintance to Thomas Coutts wherein the appeal to Burdett Coutts probably lies.

Burdett Coutts also bought two paintings of Sir Thomas More, attributed to Holbein, from the Dircksen sale of 1865. If genuine, such portraits would have been extremely prestigious additions to her collection but neither of the pictures is the portrait currently in the Frick Collection in New York which is generally considered to be the original. It is likely, therefore, that these pictures were both copies. The portrait of *Francis, Prince of Thurn and*

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<sup>383</sup> Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life*, p. 29.

<sup>384</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 246.

<sup>385</sup> Reitlinger, *The Economics*, I, p. 183.



*Taxis* is also unlikely to be a Holbein, painted as it was in 1514. Burdett Coutts was usually very careful, however, to find out everything she could about potential acquisitions, she did not buy blindly as these extracts from correspondence written when she was seventy six indicate. In 1890 she wrote to Charles Osborne about a potential acquisition:

I should like to know something more about the picture and its history – if you can make any more out, after the strange [illegible] about the Scot Raeburn's one hardly feels sure of the best authority. You might ascertain the price – do you happen to know anything about the enclosed, I can't track it own'.<sup>386</sup>

Two days later she wrote to Osborne about another picture: 'I enclose a letter I have received about a Shakespeare picture – I don't know if it is worth making any enquiry about it, excepting for my having several'.<sup>387</sup> In the case of the spurious Holbeins, even careful collectors such as Burdett Coutts could not always rely on apparent provenance for authenticity in their Old Master collection.

Many of the pictures Burdett Coutts acquired were also purchased at private sales or exhibitions. Again, portraits figure highly in those sales and inevitably family connections are prominent. Also notable are portraits of literary and theatrical figures: *Geoffrey Chaucer*,<sup>388</sup> *Lord Byron* (Richard Westall, National Portrait Gallery, fig. 32), *Milton* (Robert Walker, untraced), and *Robert Burns*.<sup>389</sup> Amongst Burdett Coutts's collection of portraits are several of national heroes such as *Cromwell* by Robert Walker (private collection, fig. 33) and *Admiral Horatio Nelson*, (National Galleries of Scotland, 1797, fig. 34, ) by Lemuel F. Abbott. Such portraits of famous British figures would have emphasised Burdett Coutts's

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<sup>386</sup> Letter dated 26 January 1890 from Sandon Hall, Burdett Coutts BL 46402.

<sup>387</sup> Letter dated 28 January 1890, Burdett Coutts BL 46402.

<sup>388</sup> Although attributed to Occleve in the Christie's 1922 auction catalogue (lot 113) this is a copy of the posthumous portrait of Chaucer by Occleve in the *Der Regimine Principum* (BM Harleian MS 4806). All portraits of Chaucer are posthumous and spring from Occleve's original, see 'The Portraits of Geoffrey Chaucer', *Magazine of Art* ( July, August, and September 1990).

<sup>389</sup> This picture was signed and dated 1790 and attributed to J. C. Ibbotson but is unlikely to be of the poet. It would seem very likely to be the same picture sent to the National Portrait Gallery by Lady Guernsey in 1938, and rejected as a likeness of Burns by the Gallery.

patriotism, her love of literature in the form of the classics and thus her 'good taste' and refinement. Burdett Coutts also owned several portraits of the Duke of Wellington, reflecting the important place he held in her life. At least two of these portraits were commissions. The Duke disliked the business of having his portrait painted – 'irksome' – was apparently his word for it.<sup>390</sup> As a result of this reluctance Burdett Coutts valued all the more a picture which C. R. Leslie painted for her in 1854.<sup>391</sup> The Duke had many sittings for the picture (now at Stratfield Saye) which represented him and his daughter-in-law, Lady Douro, standing on the staircase of Buckingham Palace, a prestigious location for which permission had to be obtained from the Queen:

My Dear Angela... I have delayed answering your letter until I could give you the Queen's reply about the proposed sketch. She was exceedingly gracious and said, that she was most happy to give permission for such a sketch to be taken of the staircase for so good a purpose. I enclose the "Order" for Mr. Leslie.<sup>392</sup>

The date for this letter is 24 March 1853 and this date corresponds with the date Osborne gives for the purchase of the picture, 1854. This places the picture at a slightly later date than suggested by Richard Walker in his work on Regency portraits in the National Gallery.<sup>393</sup> According to Osborne, the picture (fig. 35) was commissioned by Angela Burdett Coutts in 1854 at a cost of three hundred guineas, and the face painted from a sketch by Leslie executed two months before Wellington's death.<sup>394</sup> Osborne noted that the picture was 'a great deal altered after it was done at the suggestion of Miss Coutts', which

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<sup>390</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>391</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A. On another occasion Landseer wrote to her 'At last I have had the Duke of Wellington to sit up for a few minutes only. Soon I hope to have the pleasure of showing you my attempts', National Art Library 86 wwl.1849. However, there is no record of any Landseer portrait of the Duke in Burdett Coutts's collection.

<sup>392</sup> Burdett Patterson, *Angela Burdett Coutts*, p. 42.

<sup>393</sup> Richard Walker, *Regency Portrait Painters*. 2 vols. (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1985), I, p. 541.

<sup>394</sup> CON.

gives us a rare glimpse of Burdett Coutts using her power as a patron.<sup>395</sup> Another letter from Leslie dated 1851 suggests that Burdett Coutts kept a firm control on artists working for her: 'Dear Madam, I am almost ashamed to send you this attempt; but if you think it at all like, I can perhaps improve its appearance or make something better from it'.<sup>396</sup>

Burdett Coutts also commissioned a portrait from Robert Thorburn of Wellington with his grandchildren in the library at Stratfield Saye, painted posthumously in 1853 (private collection, fig. 36).<sup>397</sup> This would also have been prestigious commission, and Burdett Coutts believed it to be the largest miniature ever painted on ivory 'of which the artist had many pieces dovetailed together'.<sup>398</sup> It depicts the retired military hero and politician reading his correspondence surrounded by his grandchildren, a very domestic and conventional representation; the children are beautiful, the young girl listening intently to her grandfather's words while holding some picked flowers. There is nothing to suggest his connection with the army or politics, rather it is a conventional portrait of an elderly gentleman in a grand domestic setting, perhaps reflecting the close relationship between sitter and commissioner rather than the public hero. Burdett Coutts also possessed two portraits which were gifts, one from Masquerier and the other by Jackson which Osborne records was presented to her by the Duke himself.<sup>399</sup> Osborne also noted that shortly before the Duke's death in 1852 Leslie executed a full-length sketch of Wellington for Burdett Coutts.<sup>400</sup> Some years later however, this 'mysteriously' disappeared and was never recovered. In H. Crabb Robinson's diary he records that in 1852 Leslie also painted the Duke as he appeared at an evening party: 'it is believed for Miss Coutts'.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> CON.

<sup>396</sup> Letter dated 11 February 1851 from 2 Abercorn Place, St John's Wood, Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

<sup>397</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 85.

<sup>398</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>399</sup> CON.

<sup>400</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>401</sup> Quoted in Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

Of the portraits of Burdett Coutts's father, the most familiar is one by Thomas Lawrence (National Portrait Gallery, fig. 9), a companion piece to the portrait of her mother (National Portrait Gallery, fig. 8). Both pictures were commissioned by Thomas Coutts and begun in 1793 to mark the wedding of Francis Burdett and Sophia Coutts. They were among the many pictures unfinished at the time of Lawrence's death in 1830. These portraits were subsequently claimed by the Duchess of St Albans and finished, probably by Richard Evans, in 1831.<sup>402</sup> These pendant paintings follow conventional norms and although the treatment of each sitter is very different, were clearly meant to hang together. Burdett stands soberly dressed, in classical pose, one hand resting on scrolls, the other on the base of a bust on the top of a classical pillar in an interior setting. He looks ahead and above as if inspired whilst a copy of the Domesday Book and the bust of an early English king lie at the foot of the column suggesting Burdett's link with ancient English liberties. These are all attributes of a thinking gentleman, a traditional gendered representation. The artist portrays Burdett as a man of ideals whereas the portrait of Sophia also follows a traditional gendered representation in its lack of individuality. Sophia Coutts, in contrast to the classical and intellectual attributes of her husband is located in a rural setting, as if she has just sat down after a country walk with her bonnet in her hand. Burdett looks as if inspired by a far-off vision, whilst Sophia looks straight ahead with a rather blank expression. While both are clearly complementary in style, Burdett is depicted as a more thoughtful, complex personality whilst Sophia is depicted as essentially a pretty girl in a rural setting with apparently little thought in her head. Once again a rural background is used to represent the female, the link with the natural world reinforced by her corsage and the wild flowers growing on the bank; all attributes which reinforce the feminine virtues of beauty, grace and natural sensibility.<sup>403</sup> Sophia's dress of simple yet clearly fine clothes suggesting innocence, contrast with the sober black silk Burdett is wearing; his depiction as a man of ideas and hers as a leisured lady out for a walk also contribute as signifiers of status. Somewhat unusually however, there is no overt pictorial attempt to link the two portraits as was often the case in eighteenth-century pendant portraiture; the backgrounds are entirely

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<sup>402</sup> For a full discussion see Walker, *Regency Portrait Painters*, I, p. 75.

<sup>403</sup> Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life*, p. 19.

dissimilar and there is no connection in the gesture or gaze of the sitters to form 'a pair'. However the pairing is still there in the fulfilment of the conventions of eighteenth-century gender representation wherein the character of the male is strong and dynamic, for the female, there is little attempt at individualisation, all is passive and quiet.<sup>404</sup>

Other pictures of Sir Francis include an oil painting by Thomas Phillips painted in 1834 which was presented to the National Portrait Gallery by Burdett Coutts in 1858 (fig. 37): 'A good picture and like my dear Father...never been out of the family since it was painted by Phillips for my cousin Dudley Coutts Stuart after whose death I purchased the picture at the sale of his property'.<sup>405</sup> A watercolour by Sir William Charles Ross painted in 1840 (fig. 38), depicts Sir Francis aged about seventy in his library. Despite his move to the Right in later life when he became a Conservative politician, Burdett chose to have Tooke's bust prominently incorporated into his portrait. This is the only allusion to Burdett's past glories as a champion of liberty; otherwise the portrait is very much of the elder statesman in retirement, sitting in his study after an excursion with his dog into the countryside. The accoutrements of class and gender are prominently displayed; the large leather armchair, the shiny boots, top hat and cane of the gentleman, the dog at his feet and the papers and books suggestive of the thinking man. There is little of the firebrand left yet clearly Burdett was reluctant to bury this association with the past. It is interesting that three years later Burdett Coutts commissioned a similar portrait by Ross of herself (fig.39). Ross (1794/5-1860), a favourite of Queen Victoria, achieved an international reputation.<sup>406</sup> He often painted on ivory and his miniatures got larger and more rectangular in response to and encouragement for a vogue for full-length portrait drawings. He was highly influential and known for using larger forms of three-quarter length and full-length portraits in sumptuous settings as exemplified by these portraits.<sup>407</sup> In its choice of artist, size of portrait and media

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<sup>404</sup> Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life*, p. 29.

<sup>405</sup> Letter dated 27 April 1858 N.P.G. Archives No. 34. Sir Francis Burdett. This donation was as a result of a request from the Chairman of the Trustees, Lord Stanhope, for a portrait of her father.

<sup>406</sup> John Murdoch, Jim Murrell, Patrick Noon and Roy Strong, *The English Miniature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 200.

<sup>407</sup> Murdock et al, *The English Miniature*, p. 406.

this portrait of Burdett Coutts was clearly meant as a complimentary portrait to that of her father, in many ways similar to marriage pendant portraits. The background interior settings are very similar with the strong display of furniture, particularly large chairs, a traditional prop in both paintings and photographic portraits of the time. Whilst Burdett's portrait hints at an outdoor life however, Burdett Coutts is depicted very much within the traditional female domestic sphere. In contrast to the marriage portrait of her mother, there is a suggestion of an intellectual life in the book lying on the chair and the papers on the desk but the vase of flowers and the delicate (and expensive) lace in her hand emphasise the traditional associations with female gender representation and hint at her high social status. We have no suggestion of the vast philanthropic work undertaken by the sitter; the artist depicts Burdett Coutts as a conventional beautifully dressed woman in a typically cluttered domestic setting of the period. All the gender and class signifiers that characterised the earlier portraits of her parents may still be seen, although fifty years separate the paintings. Given that this portrait was commissioned by Burdett Coutts we must assume that this representation was how she wished to be depicted, that is, as a dutiful loving daughter in her rightful domestic sphere gazing fondly at her more dynamic father.

As might be expected, there were several portraits of royalty in the collection. A portrait of Mary, Duchess of Teck (untraced, fig.40), was commissioned by Burdett Coutts from Sidney Hodges and painted at Kensington Palace in 1869.<sup>408</sup> Other royal portraits reflect her grandfather's connections with royal customers of the bank including a large portrait of the Duke of York by Lawrence (fig. 41) and a portrait of his brother, the Duke of Clarence (National Trust, Upton House, Bearsted Collection, fig. 42, ), commissioned from Lawrence by Lady Burdett. A 1764 portrait of Queen Charlotte and her two eldest children (H.M The Queen, fig. 43), by Allan Ramsay was purchased for Burdett Coutts by John James Masquerier in 1844.<sup>409</sup> Portraits of national heroes and royalty would have emphasised Burdett Coutts patriotism and royal connections to the viewer and left them in no doubt of the influence and heritage of Burdett Coutts.

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<sup>408</sup> CON.

<sup>409</sup> CON.

The commissioned portraits by Edwin Long of Sir Henry Irving reflect Burdett Coutts's love of the theatre and also the fondness for the actor for whom Mrs. Brown, her former governess and later companion had a great admiration. Portraits of Mrs. Brown formed a significant part of Burdett Coutts's portrait collection, and there were at least eight in her possession; the earliest I have been able to detect is a sketch of Burdett Coutts and Mrs. Brown dating from c. 1830. According to a newspaper report in the *Daily Express* of Burdett Coutts's funeral, a painting of Mrs. Brown by G. F. Watts hung in the Baroness's own sitting room: 'it is supposed to be that great artist's masterpiece'.<sup>410</sup> Algernon Charles Swinburne was approached by Watts as part of his House of Fame project and wrote: 'Of course, it is a great honour for one to be asked to sit to him, now especially as he accepts no commission and paints portraits only for three reasons – friendship, beauty and celebrity; having the 'world' at his feet expecting to be painted'. It seems unlikely that given such demands on Watts that he would have had time for portraits of the unknown Mrs. Brown despite her wealthy patron.<sup>411</sup>

Amongst the pictures subsequently painted for Burdett Coutts by Hodges are a 'loyalty portrait' of Weedon, Burdett Coutts's butler, a 'faithful and trusted servant'.<sup>412</sup> Although portraits of Mrs. Brown could technically fall into this category, her extremely close relationship with Burdett Coutts put her status above that of servant and, arguably, she was more a member of Burdett Coutts's family than an employee. In fact, the view of the servants as part of a 'family' in its broadest sense was becoming eroded during the nineteenth century and the individual servant portrait was in decline as relations between employer and servant became more 'business like' and less feudal in nature.<sup>413</sup> Portraits of

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<sup>410</sup> *Daily Express* (31 December 1906), Burdett Coutts BL 46407. I have sought the advice of the Watts Gallery and they have no record of such a portrait by Watts and I believe that there may have been confusion with the full-length portrait by Edwin Long which hung in the room overlooking the park at the Piccadilly house

<sup>411</sup> Quoted in Charles Saumarez Smith, *The National Portrait Gallery* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1997), p. 136.

<sup>412</sup> CON.

<sup>413</sup> Giles Waterfield 'Social Critique' in Giles Waterfield, Anne French with Matthew Craske, *Below Stairs: Four Hundred Years of Servants' Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2004), p. 176.

individual servants date back to the seventeenth century and were often recognition of a servant's loyalty or attachment to the employer. However, by the mid nineteenth century depictions of servants had generally changed from representations of individuals to groups of servants either as upholders of the status quo or, invariably, female servants as the victims of thoughtless employers or a cruel society.<sup>414</sup> Burdett Coutts's attitude towards servants was evidently of a more traditional, paternalistic kind. In her article on Burdett Coutts, Mary Spencer-Warren mentions that the men employed at Holly Lodge were not young and that she was told that unless they were there 'quite a number of years, the others looked upon them as interlopers'. Many were past actual work but 'there they stayed until the baroness pensions them off'.<sup>415</sup> By its very nature the portrait of a servant was also usually the preserve of the wealthy and an indication of one's own status in society in that one could not only afford to have members of one's family immortalised but could also afford to commission an artist to paint a servant.<sup>416</sup>

Other notable portraits include the young Charles Dickens by Samuel Drummond (Charles Dickens Museum, fig. 44) and a portrait of his wife, Catherine (Charles Dickens Museum, fig. 45), by Daniel Maclise. Burdett Coutts's relationship with Catherine Dickens was an uneasy one, 'she was prone to use the expression "poor dear Mrs. Dickens" and 'anyone knowing the Baroness soon learned that the use of the epithet "poor dear" implied disparagement'.<sup>417</sup> On one occasion in 1871 she was given a photograph of Charles Dickens by his wife and showed it to Charles Osborne with the words: ' "Poor dear, she thought it such a good likeness. But I cannot see it myself. It seems to me a particularly bad one". In those words, as spoken by the Baroness, were compressed a sketch of Mrs. Dickens and an estimate of her abilities'.<sup>418</sup> As a lover of the theatre, and Shakespeare in particular, it is

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<sup>414</sup> Waterfield, *Below Stairs*, p. 170.

<sup>415</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 356.

<sup>416</sup> Alison Light 'The Role of the Servant in Art', *The Guardian* (8 November 2003).

<sup>417</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>418</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.



unsurprising that Burdett Coutts owned several portraits of the dramatist, the portraits now known as the *Lumley Shakespeare*, the *Zuccaro Shakespeare*, the *Felton Shakespeare* and the *Burdett Coutts Shakespeare* (all Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, fig. 46). Although Burdett Coutts probably purchased each of these portraits in the belief that these were authentic contemporary portraits of Shakespeare, none are now regarded as such. The naming of a Shakespeare portrait after the possessor would have added great prestige to Burdett Coutts, serve to immortalise her name and emphasise her connection with the greatest English playwright.

Another aspect of Burdett Coutts's love for portraiture was her highly regarded miniature collection. When compiling his pioneering survey *Art Treasures of Great Britain* in 1853, Gustav Waagen included Angela Burdett Coutts as one of the few female art collectors in the country, primarily as a result of this collection which was mostly acquired at the Horace Walpole Strawberry Hill sale in 1842.<sup>419</sup> Inclusion in this eminent three volume work in which Waagen discussed the finest pictures then in largely aristocratic hands in the country would have enhanced Burdett Coutts's reputation as a recognised collector of note.<sup>420</sup> An art collection, as a symbol of the aristocratic gentleman, would have put Burdett Coutts firmly into this aristocratic milieu and served to reemphasise her aristocratic lineage. Inclusion would also have added to her status as a collector by conferring the necessary gravitas upon

it, something which a female collector might lack. in the eyes of her contemporaries. At the time Waagen was compiling this work she had of course not yet begun her collection of

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<sup>419</sup> The collection consisted of some eighty miniatures, of which sixty were oils and twenty enamels, and included works by some of the finest painters of the genre, with examples dating from the seventeenth century and up to the mid nineteenth century,

<sup>420</sup> The other female collectors included were Sarah Rogers and Mrs. Denman, Waagen, *Treasures*, II, p. 96.

Old Masters and contemporary works.<sup>421</sup>

Walpole had owned portraits by some of the most famous miniaturists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Peter Oliver, Jean Petitot and Richard Cosway. In addition to the portrait of Sir Kenelm (National Portrait Gallery, fig. 47), Walpole also owned Oliver's portrait of *Lady Venetia Digby Aged Nineteen*, 1619 (untraced, fig. 48), *Lady Venetia Digby* (untraced, fig. 49) and a family portrait of Sir Kenelm, Lady Venetia and their two sons (untraced, fig. 50). Walpole had regarded the acquisition of these pictures as one of the greatest strokes of luck as a collector: 'The capital work is a large miniatures copied from Van Dyck, of Sir Kenelm, his wife, two sons, the most beautiful piece of the size that I believe exists'.<sup>422</sup> In 1854 she had the pictures restored by one of the foremost miniaturists of the nineteenth century, Sir William Newton, who was insistent that Burdett Coutts be aware of the exact state of the pictures as 'there is very little remaining'.<sup>423</sup>

In addition to the portraits of the Digby family Burdett Coutts also purchased portraits of Charles I, Charles II, James II, Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans and Madame de La Valliere (untraced) from the Strawberry Hill sale (fig. 51). All these miniatures were by Jean Petitot, (b.1607), one of the foremost miniaturists of his day and therefore impressive and important additions to her collection. Burdett Coutts seems to have continued to collect miniatures all her life. She purchased twenty miniatures from the Bohn sale in 1885 and owned six portraits from the collection of George IV. Also included are works by some of the most noted contemporary miniaturists, William Newton, Richard Guy, William Charles Ross, Alfred Chalon, Robert Thorburn and Hugh Ross. Burdett Coutts was also defiantly collecting miniatures as they began to fall from favour, as the *Art Journal* lamented: 'A little longer and we shall have outlived the art of miniature painting'.<sup>424</sup> The genre was threatened by photography and a lack of innovation, despite an exhibition in 1865 which tried

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<sup>421</sup> Biltcliffe, *A Cultural Geography*, p. 98.

<sup>422</sup> Graham Reynolds, *English Portrait Miniatures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 33.

<sup>423</sup> Letter from Sir William Newton to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 7 October 1854, CON.

<sup>424</sup> *Art Journal* (June 1860), p.183 quoted in Murdoch et al, *The English Miniature*, p. 196.

unsuccessfully to revive interest, but could not excite sufficient enthusiasm despite staunch support from Queen Victoria.<sup>425</sup> Burdett Coutts's miniature collection differs from the rest of her pictures in that it is not always characterized by personal attachment to the people portrayed. Obviously there are portraits of people whom she knew well such as Wellington, Queen Victoria and Hannah Brown but there are many which have no obvious family or sentimental attachment for her. She was certainly very acquisitive by nature but this was not a collection that remained hidden and unused. Arguably it fulfilled the same kind of tactile function as a cabinet of curiosities; the objects could be taken out of a drawer, touched and handled in the same way and in this case the touch could perhaps bring the subject of the portrait closer. A letter in the British Library to Charles Osborne reveals that Burdett Coutts did remove the miniatures for inspection and that the contents were valued and therefore locked away: 'I left the miniature table in much confusion being unable to clear it up before leaving...lock it up and put the Digby family and others left out in the drawer. Then the keys can be locked up'.<sup>426</sup> Burdett Coutts not only collected miniatures but also commissioned them herself as exemplified by the portraits of the Duke of Wellington and Hannah Brown. She also lent her miniatures to exhibitions such as the one held by the Burlington Club in 1889.<sup>427</sup> The miniature provided the most intimate manner of depiction as well as being extremely transportable, allowing her, wherever she was, to surround herself with images of people that mattered to her.

## Patron

She cared for Art for the sake of its message, rather than the love of beauty

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<sup>425</sup> Murdoch et al, *The English Miniature*, p. 206.

<sup>426</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to Charles Osborne, Folkestone, 2 December 1892, Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

<sup>427</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to Charles Osborne, Paris, 17 April 1889, Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

or from an elective and fastidious taste. It was the sentiment of a picture, the feelings it touched that attracted her. The skill of the artist was a matter of secondary consideration. It was therefore not surprising that although she collected splendid pictures, miniatures and prints, she purchased many that were indifferent. This was not entirely due to kindness of heart, though she often bought pictures to aid struggling artists.<sup>428</sup>

Patronage is defined as giving influential support, favour, encouragement or countenance to a person, institution or work and has connotations of condescension and protection.<sup>429</sup>

These days patronage is largely associated with the arts, but in the nineteenth century it was probably the most common means of advancement for those aspiring to succeed in both public and private life.<sup>430</sup> It certainly pervaded every sphere of public life. In his study of patronage, J. M. Bourne states that 'it would be impossible to over-estimate the full implications of every aspect of patronage in nineteenth-century English life in every meaning of the term. It afforded both protection, supplication, pressure, greed, ambition, flattery and intrigue, exposing the patron to the ingratitude and contempt of the satisfied and the malice of the disappointed'.<sup>431</sup>

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not share modern western world scruples over patronage and its shades of nepotism and corruption. Patronage was an accepted method of looking after family and friends, as indeed it is often still considered perfectly acceptable in many parts of the world today. Advance within the Church of England was difficult without a patron.<sup>432</sup> The Rev. Bagshaw Stevens felt no compunction in persistently badgering Thomas Coutts to write to the Lord Chancellor on his behalf in order that he might obtain a better clerical living, even when Bagshaw Steven's strong affection for Coutts's daughter Fanny, had strained the relationship between himself and the Coutts

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<sup>428</sup> Charles Osborne in Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>429</sup> *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1982).

<sup>430</sup> J. M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>431</sup> Bourne, *Patronage*, p. 7.

<sup>432</sup> Bourne, *Patronage*, p. 90.

family.<sup>433</sup> From a letter in Coutts's archive from the artist Henry Fuseli, it is apparent that Thomas Coutts performed this service for other friends and acquaintances: 'The name of the lad from whom I solicited Messrs. Coutts's patronage is Thomas Rend, he has made one voyage to China and now wishes for the rank of third mate'.<sup>434</sup>

It was a paternalist society and quite content to remain so. The East India Company, for example, was a particularly powerful source of patronage and when it was reorganised in 1854 the Directors who were removed protested vehemently.<sup>435</sup> Their role as patrons was highly congenial and most died in office.<sup>436</sup> Many metropolitan people also acted as intermediaries or, as Bourne terms it, 'brokers'.<sup>437</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts revealed herself as a 'broker' in the matter of a post in the army.<sup>438</sup> In a letter to Sir Garrett Wolseley she introduced a Major William La Touche and states that she would be very grateful if he would 'say a word in his favour to the H. R. H. the Duke of Cambridge' [Commander in Chief of the Army at the time], 'with whom I understand any appointment rests' in connection with a certain position'... I have known and loved him from boyhood and I know since that he is reliable, conscientious, and fully competent...' <sup>439</sup>

As has been noted already, by the middle of the nineteenth century the aristocratic model of art patron and collector was becoming increasingly rare.<sup>440</sup> Few but the Pre-Raphaelites experienced a close relationship with their patrons; most preferred to sell their work

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<sup>433</sup> Galbraith, *The Journal*, pp. xxiii, xxiv, 491.

<sup>434</sup> Letter dated 4 February 1819 from Henry Fuseli to Thomas Coutts, Coutts Archive No.2270.

<sup>435</sup> Bourne, *Patronage*, p. 61.

<sup>436</sup> Bourne, *Patronage*, p. 61.

<sup>437</sup> Bourne, *Patronage*, p. 71.

<sup>438</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to Sir Garrett Joseph Wolseley dated 13 July 1878, Wolseley Papers, Hove Public Library.

<sup>439</sup> Sir Garrett Joseph Wolseley (1833-1913), Field Marshal who instituted many reforms in the British Army. M Windus and Francis Martin *Concise Dictionary of Military Biography* (London: Windrow & Greene Ltd, 1990), p.330. Charles Osborne lists a Colonel David La Touche as having given Angela Burdett Coutts a painting of the *Virgin at Her Devotions* by Sassoferrato, CON.

<sup>440</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 210.

through dealers, which also screened them from the possible 'tyranny' of a patron's taste.

<sup>441</sup> According to Macleod, every artist's memoir indicates that personal idiosyncrasies played too large a part, patrons were exacting and tyrannical and that artists often felt humiliated, lost their tempers and ultimately their clients.<sup>442</sup>

There was also an evangelical encouragement to patronise art. As Gladstone stated in an article in 1843: 'Religion and Christian virtue, like the faculty of taste and the perception of beauty, have their place, aye, and that the first place, in political economy, as the means of creating and preserving wealth'.<sup>443</sup> The Church of England and protestants sects generally saw no contradiction between the accumulation of great wealth and Christ's teachings.<sup>444</sup> Evangelicals believed strongly that wealth was a reward for hard work and their richest members a source of inspiration for others.<sup>445</sup> It was expected that this wealth should be looked after closely and used wisely however, usually in the form of philanthropy. Ruskin shared in this belief and exempted art collecting from the category of wanton expenditure condemned by the church since it benefited artists and the general economy.<sup>446</sup> He considered that true patronage would be to 'assist the struggling artist or to relieve the unsuccessful one even if the patron did not like the work in question'.<sup>447</sup> Thus large fortunes could be made and large sums spent on the accumulation of works of art without any guilt. Burdett Coutts would therefore have had little difficulty in reconciling her great wealth with her knowledge of the great poverty experienced by many of the labouring poor for she was the heir of someone who had worked hard, accrued a fortune and now she was

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<sup>441</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 241.

<sup>442</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 241.

<sup>443</sup> Article in the *Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Magazine*, 1843 quoted in Richard Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone versus Disraeli* (London: Pimlico, 2007), p. 35.

<sup>444</sup> McLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 223.

<sup>445</sup> McLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 223.

<sup>446</sup> McLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 223.

<sup>447</sup> John Ruskin, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting Delivered at Edinburgh, November 1853* (London: Smith, Elder, 1854), Lecture II, pp. 86-7.

using it wisely in philanthropic activity and also the accumulation of a great art collection. Although Burdett Coutts purchased from artists in real need, and their circumstances may have influenced her, her patronage seems to have chiefly lay in purchasing and commissioning paintings on themes that she liked.<sup>448</sup>

Burdett Coutts's view of women in public life was ambivalent but she seems to have had no qualms in commissioning female artists. She championed women within the restrictive confines of the domestic sphere and may have seen their presence in the art world as an extension of a traditional female accomplishments at a time when middle-class women were actively encouraged to take painting and watercolour lessons.<sup>449</sup> Her support for female art education and purchases from female artists came at a time when women were increasingly entering the professional art world.<sup>450</sup> She was certainly not the only female art collector at this period but the female lack of legal independence - wives could not sign contracts, for example - and bargaining power meant that the financial side of collecting was usually left to husbands.<sup>451</sup> As a result female names rarely appear in artists diaries or dealers' account books.<sup>452</sup>

In 1842-3 the Female School of Art was established, intended to educate women in the applied arts, or arts applied to manufacture, rather than fine art.<sup>453</sup> It thus had less prestige and was considered especially suitable for women as it relied less on creativity and inspiration.<sup>454</sup> In 1860 *The Spectator* noted in an article on *Employment for Women* that, since 1852, 690 students had entered the school by March 1860, of which seventy-seven were

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<sup>448</sup> CON.

<sup>449</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 29.

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<sup>451</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 29.

<sup>452</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 29.

<sup>453</sup> Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (London: Women's Press, 1987), p. 44.

<sup>454</sup> Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women*, pp. 19, 20.

studying with the view of maintaining themselves: 'These are chiefly of the class who would otherwise swell the ranks of governesses who oppress the tender hearted readers of *The Times* advertising columns'.<sup>455</sup> As women continued to apply in ever increasing numbers to the art schools, the problem of their accommodation had to be addressed. Lady Eastlake, the wife of the President of the Royal Academy, when in Rome with her husband, had 'observed with pain the circumstances in which the student there was forced to live'.<sup>456</sup> There was no provision in London apart from the Royal Academy and it was the idea of Louisa Twining to open a hostel for female art students.<sup>457</sup> In 1879 in response to this need a house in Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury, was purchased by Lady White Cooper specifically for the accommodation of female art students and opened under the Presidency of Angela Burdett Coutts. Burdett Coutts also furnished the home and paid for the first three years rent on the property.<sup>458</sup> It is likely that in this matter Burdett Coutts was mostly concerned with the welfare of the student rather than their professional lives. The Art Students' Home was a great success, so much so that a second home was taken next door. Numbers 4/5 Brunswick Square provided 'the advantages of home and family life' for young lady students attending art schools and other classes in London under the 'advice and care of an experienced lady. The charges are very moderate'.<sup>459</sup>

According to a report in *The Englishwomen's Review*,<sup>460</sup> Burdett Coutts also presented prizes in 1879 to the students of the School.<sup>461</sup> She spoke:

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<sup>455</sup> *Spectator* (31 March 1860) p.305 quoted in Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women*, fn 66, p. 66.

<sup>456</sup> Lady White Cooper in Angela Burdett Coutts ed., *Woman's Mission: A series of Congressional Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women. Arranged and Edited by the Baroness Burdett Coutts* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co, 1893), p. 378.

<sup>457</sup> Louisa Twining (1820-1912), was known for her work as a workhouse visitor.

<sup>458</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 224.

<sup>459</sup> *The Englishwoman's Review* (15 March 1880), quoted in Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 135.

<sup>460</sup> *The Englishwoman's Review* in Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 180.

<sup>461</sup> *The Englishwomen's Review* in Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 234.



in congratulatory terms of the steadfastness of purpose which seemed to characterize the proceedings of the school, a quality which she believed always denoted genius of the highest order. She also referred briefly but earnestly to the houses with which her name had been especially connected in Brunswick Square...which provided the greatest possible use for those who came up from the country for finding educational employment in London as besides the moral part of the question, they afforded particular advantage for Study.<sup>462</sup>

Although evidently a strong supporter of the school there is no evidence that she founded it, nor that the prizes were named after her as has been suggested.<sup>463</sup> In 1883 the House was listed in *Kelly's Directory for London* as the House for Lady Art Students and as having nineteen places under the care of Elizabeth Malone, the Lady Resident. The original occupants of the house were of a serious disposition: 'a home for those who must live out of a parent's care'.<sup>464</sup> It was not intended as a school but for those 'with occupation and friends of their own, and generally it might be said always too earnest and thorough in their work to be easily turned aside to waste their time'.<sup>465</sup> However, although it was still in operation at the time of Burdett Coutts's death in 1906, by the outbreak of war in 1914 it had become merely another lodging house under the management of a Mrs. Georgina Malone, presumably a relative of the first Lady Resident.<sup>466</sup>

Queen Victoria was a notable supporter of women artists. Amongst the artists represented in her collection was Mary Osborn and she gave commissions for child portraits to Mary Severn and Henrietta Ward.<sup>467</sup> However, the commissions for large historical works went to male artists which was the norm throughout the whole period.<sup>468</sup> Patrons in general seldom

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<sup>462</sup> *The Englishwomen's Review* in Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 132.

<sup>463</sup> Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 234.

<sup>464</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. 378.

<sup>465</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. 378.

<sup>466</sup> London Borough of Camden, Local History Archive, 1911 Census for Borough of Holborn.

<sup>467</sup> Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 102.

<sup>468</sup> Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 102.

competed to buy women's pictures and there was little interest in women's painting from dealers.<sup>469</sup> The lack of formal training was an element but other factors had a bearing, not least the lack of critical favour and financial investment.<sup>470</sup> Burdett Coutts had several paintings by women in her collection. The earliest dated purchases I have found are the portraits of Burdett Coutts and her aunt, Lady Langham, in 1839 executed by her drawing master's sister, Emily Scott. Other little known artists include the Vicomtesse Douville, Mrs. Newcomen, Kate Malcolm, Mrs. Dawson and Mary Turner.<sup>471</sup> More popular artists in Burdett Coutts's collection included Elizabeth Jerichau Baumann (1819-1881) and Mrs. Criddle (1805-1880), born Mary Ann Alabaster, who was a well known watercolourist and painter. Burdett Coutts owned *Lavinia and Her Mother* (untraced), which she purchased from the Society of Painters in Watercolour in 1849 at a cost of twenty-nine pounds. Burdett Coutts also bought a set of four pictures, *The Four Seasons* (untraced), in 1857 from this artist.<sup>472</sup>

Burdett Coutts also purchased two works by her Highgate neighbour, Mary Ann Howitt (1824-1884). She certainly knew Howitt who moved in a varied social scene that included writers and artists such as Rossetti, Hunt and Millais and the Pre-Raphaelite influence is evident in her painting.<sup>473</sup> Interestingly Pamela Hirsch states that Mary Ann Howitt was commissioned by Angela Burdett Coutts to paint a picture on the subject of Dante and Beatrice with Barbara Bodichon modelling for Beatrice but I have been unable to find any further reference to this.<sup>474</sup> Howitts' work was criticized for its minuteness of natural detail

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<sup>469</sup> Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 102.

<sup>470</sup> Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1997), pp. 51, 52.

<sup>471</sup> CON.

<sup>472</sup> Charles Osborne states that these were used to illustrate Thomson's *Seasons* exhibition and were purchased at 'Mr. Stepney's Gallery', Pall Mall, CON.

<sup>473</sup> Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (London: Virago Press, 1979), p. 42.

<sup>474</sup> Unfortunately Hirsch's reference for this is inaccurate and she was unable to help me further on this matter. Pamela Hirsch, *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), p. 93.

and vivid colouring – betraying the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite movement.<sup>475</sup> It has been argued that women seemed to have been particularly attracted to Pre-Raphaelitism because of its emphasis on detail and subjects drawn from ‘women’s sphere’; that is domestic, intimate and less heroic themes subjected to unsentimental visual analysis.<sup>476</sup> Unfortunately the subjects of Howitt’s paintings began to be heavily criticised as too tragic, and after a hostile reaction to her painting *Boadicea* she exhibited only once more, in 1857, at the Society of Female Artists.<sup>477</sup>

Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886) was also patronised by Burdett Coutts. Solomon has been described as a ‘jobbing painter’; very conscious of the market and catered for it accordingly, despite the hostility she subsequently attracted.<sup>478</sup> The Solomon family took a great interest in the theatre and held theatrical evenings at home. This gave her a predilection for theatrical subjects and Burdett Coutts’s interest in the theatre would have made them attractive to her. *Behind the Curtain*, 1858 (private collection, fig.52),<sup>479</sup> which was acquired by Burdett Coutts from the International Exhibition of 1862 depicts a group of travelling players backstage.<sup>480</sup> The father, a clown, is shown visiting his sick daughter, and the picture is very much of ‘the tears behind the smiling face’ variety.<sup>481</sup> *The Athenaeum* referred to it as ‘a clever thought wrought out in cold and unripe colours’, concluding that ‘a jester’s sorrow is always touching’.<sup>482</sup> Burdett Coutts also commissioned *Roman Wedding Party* c.1866-70

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<sup>475</sup> *The Athenaeum* (25 March 1854), p. 380.

<sup>476</sup> Marsh, ‘Women and Art’ in Marsh and Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women*, p. 60.

<sup>477</sup> Marsh and Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women*, pp. 31-43.

<sup>478</sup> Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *The Solomon Family of Painters* (London, Geffrye Museum, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>479</sup> Also exhibited as *Interlude to a Clown’s Duties* (Leeds 1868) and *Clown Behind the Curtain* (Whitechapel, 1885). Algernon Grave, *A Century of Loan Exhibitions 1813-1912*, 3 vols. (Bath, Kingsmead: 1913-15 repr. 1970).

<sup>480</sup> CON.

<sup>481</sup> The picture was thought lost until the exhibition at the Geffrye Museum in 1985 and known only as an engraving. It is in private hands. Pamela Gerrish Nunn ‘Rebecca Solomon’s “A Young Teacher” ’ in *Burlington Magazine* (1988), No. 130, p. 767. Much of Rebecca Solomon’s work remains untraced.

<sup>482</sup> Royal Academy Review *Athenaeum* (1 May 1858) in Olmstead, *Victorian Painting*, pp. 565-67.

(untraced), at a time when Solomon's career had begun to decline, she does not appear to have regarded Solomon as tainted by her brother Simeon's disgrace although Solomon had a particularly close relationship with him.<sup>483</sup>

It is interesting to note that with the exception of Elizabeth Jerichau Baumann, all the other well-known female artists favoured by Burdett Coutts suffered from a harsh critical reception. Often ignored or patronised by critics, when their work was reviewed their choice of subject matter which was often considered unsuitable and earned considerable abuse, as to a lesser extent, did their technique.<sup>484</sup> Mary Ann Criddle suffered a nervous collapse in 1853 following rejection by the Watercolour Society for *The Four Seasons*, owned by Burdett Coutts, when the picture's borders were considered unsuitable;<sup>485</sup> Mary Howitt was reprimanded by the critic in the *Athenaeum* for use of too vivid colour and meticulous detail.<sup>486</sup> Rebecca Solomon's subject matter was often criticised and following her brother Simeon's scandalous fall from grace she too became heavily attacked for low morality.<sup>487</sup> Nevertheless, most were conventional enough when married to adopt their husband's names even though this was a difficult choice for young artists wishing to build a reputation and sustain a career. Indeed, Charles Osborne describes Mrs. Criddle in his notes as an 'amateur artist' despite the fact that she enjoyed a successful professional career.<sup>488</sup> Burdett Coutts held regular soirees and receptions both at Holly Lodge and Stratton Street. Mary Ann Howitt recorded the 'extreme kindness and delicate consideration of our opposite neighbour, the Baroness, then Miss Burdett-Coutts. She constantly invited us to Holly Lodge, and thus afforded us change of thoughts and relaxation in her highly

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<sup>483</sup> Gerrish Nunn, *The Solomon Family*, p. 22.

<sup>484</sup> Marsh and Gerrish Nunn, *Women Artists*, p. 46.

<sup>485</sup> Ellen Clayton, *English Female Artists* (London, 1876), p. 73.

<sup>486</sup> *The Athenaeum* (1 June 1850).

<sup>487</sup> Gerrish Nunn, *The Solomon Family*, pp. 21, 22.

<sup>488</sup> CON.

cultivated circle'.<sup>489</sup> Indeed the hospitality of the Baroness was well known and was often reported upon. Letters hint at a wider circle of artists commissioned or whose work was bought by Burdett Coutts of whom there is no other trace. In 1863, for example, William Roxby Beverley, a watercolourist, wrote: 'I beg to thank you for the tickets you so kindly sent me for the [illegible] at the exhibition, ...it has given me the greatest pleasure to find my pictures still please...'.<sup>490</sup> Julius Jacob (1811-1882) presented Burdett Coutts with a portrait, a copy of a picture which she had admired when hung in his studio but which had been sold to someone else. According to Charles Osborne he sent the picture to her 'in a letter begging her acceptance of it as a token of grateful thanks for many kindnesses'.<sup>491</sup> Such gift exchange would hopefully lead to more lucrative work in the future.

The best known of the artists patronised by Burdett Coutts was Edwin Long (1829-1891). Long was born in Bath, the son of congregational dissenters.<sup>492</sup> Religious themes would always dominate his work and the fact that he was a devout Christian would have naturally appealed to Burdett Coutts. Long resided for fifteen years in Ovingdon Square Kensington, a location which enabled him to cultivate connections with some of the leading artists of the day such as Watts, Poynter, Millais and Leighton.<sup>493</sup> In 1875 he moved to St John's Wood, by then an area associated with successful artists and later commissioned the fashionable architect Richard Norman Shaw to design a studio/house here.<sup>494</sup> Building upon his success he lived there for several years before moving in 1880 to *Kelston*, 61

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<sup>489</sup> 'It would be a real grief to me to leave the neighbourhood of Miss Angela Burdett Coutts for she is a noble creature'. Letter from Mary Ann Howitt to her daughter, Ann Mary, dated 22 August 1855, Howitt, *Mary Ann Howitt*, p. 89.

<sup>490</sup> Letter dated 1863 from Russell Square. William Roxby Beverley (c.1811-1889), landscape painter and watercolourist. Burdett Coutts Additional Papers BL 63097.

<sup>491</sup> CON.

<sup>492</sup> Mark Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long* (London Cygnus Arts, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>493</sup> Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 6.

<sup>494</sup> Shaw designed several houses for artists, often in a 'Tudoresque' style with William & Mary variations. Bernard Denvir, *Late Victorian Art, Design and Society 1852-1910* (London and New York: Longman Education, 1986), p. 10.

Fitzjohns Avenue.<sup>495</sup> However, Long only stayed in this house for seven years before commissioning Shaw to design a second house in nearby Netherhall Gardens which took on a status of a family seat.<sup>496</sup> In a letter to Burdett Coutts, Long reflected his own change of status in confidential tones: 'I have just got the enclosed from Mr. Graves.<sup>497</sup> If you would like to appoint any afternoon to meet at his house I shall be delighted. This move has been a dreadful business. I should never have undertaken it if I could have realised it properly...'<sup>498</sup>

In commissioning such a prestigious house Long was following in a tradition established by such successful artists as Leighton, Stone and Burges who built artistic homes in the 1870s and 1880s employing fashionable architects such as Shaw, in order to reflect their newly acquired status and the high incomes successful artists were earning.<sup>499</sup> Alma Tadema felt himself almost impoverished on an income of ten thousand pounds a year but he also could afford a magnificent home.<sup>500</sup> Houses were important elements in terms of public relations; important clients such as Burdett Coutts would have felt happier in visiting artists in a milieu in which artist and patron could feel more like intellectual and social equals.<sup>501</sup> Long painted several pictures for the Baroness, mostly portraits, although she did own *Eastern Offering*, an uncharacteristic choice for Burdett Coutts (fig. 53). Throughout his life he was an enthusiastic painter and had a reputation for never refusing a commission if he liked the subject..<sup>502</sup> In 1882-3 he painted a portrait of Burdett Coutts (untraced) and also one of

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<sup>495</sup> Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 32.

<sup>496</sup> Letter from Edwin Long to Angela Burdett Coutts dated March 1880, Burdett Coutts Additional Papers BL 63097.

<sup>497</sup> Samuel Cousins (1801-1887), RA engraver and dealer.

<sup>498</sup> Letter dated March 1880 from Edwin Long to Angela Burdett Coutts, Burdett Coutts Additional Papers BL 63097. See also Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 15.

<sup>499</sup> Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 32.

<sup>500</sup> Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 32.

<sup>501</sup> Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 32.

<sup>502</sup> Letter to *The Times* (1 November 1892), p. 7, quoted in Bills, *Edwin Longsden Long*, p. 6.

Samuel Cousins (Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter, fig. 54).<sup>503</sup> The portrait of Burdett Coutts shows her wearing the Order of Medjidie in recognition of her services to the Turkish Compassionate Fund. The *Art Journal* noted that it was 'very stately and composed; an excellent likeness without any pretence to flatter. Mr. Long's best work of the year'.<sup>504</sup> That Burdett Coutts owned and commissioned a portrait of the engraver would indicate that her relationship with Cousins was a close one. Although there is little record of the work he executed for her, he obviously did undertake several commissions as this undated letter from the Burdett Coutts archives in the British Library indicates: 'I felt it was necessary to remove the varnish completely from the steel plate, in order to erase the rust, and the process of getting off the old varnish proved to be more difficult then I had expected, requiring considerable time'.<sup>505</sup>

In 1879 Long also painted a portrait of Hannah Brown, depicting her as an old lady dressed in black and wearing a veil, bearing the sub-title from St John's Gospel: '*Whereas I was blind, now I see*' (untraced). Samuel Cousins later made an engraving from it, and as might be expected Burdett Coutts was duly consulted. In March 1880, Cousins notified the artist that:

I have the pleasure to inform you that I have brought my engravings from your portrait of Mrs. Brown to a very forward station and I will now be glad if you could call and see my proof, that I have the benefit of your remarks before I proceed further with the work.<sup>506</sup>

The relationship between patron and artist was evidently a very cordial one, Long and his wife had accompanied Burdett Coutts on her voyage on *The Walrus* along with Sir Henry Irving, in 1878, which led to her decision to marry Ashmead.<sup>507</sup> Long subsequently

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<sup>503</sup> CON.

<sup>504</sup> *Art Journal* (undated 1883), p. 220 quoted in Bills, *Edwin Longsdon Long*, p.142.

<sup>505</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A. Unfortunately the letter does not indicate which painting is referred to by Cousins.

<sup>506</sup> Letter from Samuel Cousins to Edwin Long from 24 Camden Square dated 18 March 1880, Burdett Coutts Additional Papers BL 43097.

<sup>507</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 192.

presented a small sketch to Burdett Coutts, *The Sierra Nevada* (untraced), painted from the deck of the *Walrus*.

In addition to Long, other artists were regularly commissioned by Burdett Coutts, in particular C. R. Leslie, Marshall Claxton, Sidney Hodges and Edmund Caldwell. The *Strand Magazine* in 1894 mentions Burdett Coutts's employment of another artist, Alfred J. Warne-Browne (fl. 1892), who was primarily a landscape artist.<sup>508</sup> Marshall Claxton was responsible for several paintings in Burdett Coutts's collection in addition to his commissioned works. *Christ Blessing Little Children* (untraced) was a smaller version of the picture which he had painted for the schoolroom at St Stephen's School. This version dates from 1866 and apparently hung in the Ballroom in Stratton Street, a prominent and rather strange location for the subject but perhaps a reminder to guests of their hostesses religious beliefs and philanthropic activities. Several pictures were executed during Claxton's time in Australia and purchased by Burdett Coutts before his return to England in 1858, *My Grandmother*, 1857 (untraced), was a 'quaint' picture exhibited at the Royal Academy where it was purchased by Burdett Coutts.<sup>509</sup>

Sidney Hodges (1829-1900), was chiefly a portrait painter. He was born in Sussex but became known to Burdett Coutts when she stayed at Ehrenburgh Hall, her holiday residence in Torquay, and undertook several commissions for her, chiefly portraits. In 1866 Hodges executed a portrait for her of Campbell Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury (Fulham Palace, fig. 55),<sup>510</sup> and exhibited at the Royal Academy; also one of Sir Charles Wheatstone (untraced) an oil purchased from the artist in December 1870. His portraits of Burdett Coutts's family and friends account for a substantial number of Burdett Coutts's known commissions. Her high regard for him meant that she had no hesitation in recommending him to other members of her family and acquaintances:

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<sup>508</sup> Wood, *Victorian Painters*, I, p. 553 only notes one picture exhibited by this artist, *Cornish Wreckers*, 1892. Another picture, *Groot Schar: Grave of Cecil Rhodes*, was in the Burdett Coutts 1922 sale (lot 168).

<sup>509</sup> CON.

<sup>510</sup> Now in the Fulham Palace Collection, 1976.



My dear Henry, I enclose a letter which will interest you... I requested the gentleman to communicate with you – I have named Mr. Sydney Hodges as the artist to copy – He does all for me and is an excellent artist, in fact altogether the best I think we now have and such a nice and clever person which artists are curiously very often not.<sup>511</sup>

It is rare to find evidence of Burdett Coutts giving any opinion as to her artistic practice, especially in her view of artists. She commissioned Hodges frequently - 'He does all for me' - and the expression does give the impression that she employed him rather as she might have engaged any tradesman to carry out work, it would also seem that her opinion of artists generally was not high. A letter from the Bishop of Adelaide, a bishopric founded by Burdett Coutts, reveals just how influential a personal recommendation from Burdett Coutts could be: 'I had intended if within the scope of the fund sent me from Adelaide, to employ Mr Hodges, whose likeness of the Bishop of Exeter attracted my notice at the Royal Academy. It will be an additional reason for so doing that you recommend him'.<sup>512</sup> Hodges was obviously working on a picture for her in 1873 and, again, she wrote to Lord Harrowby from Edinburgh: 'oblige Mr. Barton to give a commission to Mr. Sydney Hodges... he is far the best'.<sup>513</sup>

Among Hodges' pictures of the family was one of Burdett Coutts's sisters, Mrs. Trevanion. Osborne noted that it was 'much altered at Miss Coutts's request' which echoes the comments about Leslie's portrait of the Duke of Wellington. Hodges also acted for her as an agent in her dealings with other artists and in this capacity acquired *Interior of a School* (untraced): 'from Mr. Bracher the artist in great distress... for £60 (sic)', the *Portrait of the Young Charles Dickens* by Samuel Drummond in 1882 and the misattributed Holbein, *Prince of*

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<sup>511</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts from Edinburgh addressed to the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Harrowby dated 18 September 1873, Harrowby MSS. Fourth Series.

<sup>512</sup> Letter dated 21 November 1866, WCA F1/1-31.

<sup>513</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Harrowby, undated, 1873, Harrowby MSS Fourth Series.

*Thurn and Taxis*, in 1867.<sup>514</sup> Hodges gave a picture to Burdett Coutts on her birthday, a view from Ehrenburg Hall. Again, as with Jacob, this can be seen as evidence of a degree of familiarity, possibly a token of appreciation for work commissioned by her, a reciprocal form of gift exchange, bringing himself again to her notice should she require further work. In 1874 he painted a copy of *Portrait of John Coutts* by Allan Ramsay, which Burdett Coutts presented to the Edinburgh Council Chamber when she was made a Freeman of the City and he was one of her attendants standing on the platform when the Freedom was conferred.<sup>515</sup>

In 1876 the *Art Journal* published an obituary of the artist Edmund Bristow (1787-1876). Bristow had been a successful painter of country life, patronised from an early age by royalty and prominent members of society. However, the *Journal* recorded that a visit to his studio by Burdett Coutts left the lady returning empty-handed because she had offended Bristow with her 'patronising manner'.<sup>516</sup> Interestingly, another source tells us that Mrs. Masquerier, wife of the artist J.J. Masquerier who had known Burdett Coutts from a child, was apparently on more intimate terms with Mrs. Brown than with Burdett Coutts, as she 'was apt to allow a slight tinge of patronage to creep into her manner'.<sup>517</sup> According to Charles Osborne's biographical notes, there is no doubt that Angela Burdett Coutts was well aware of her social position and could be extremely arrogant. She was almost proud of the illegibility of her writing, for example, and refused to admit to a fallibility that might result in 'depriving her of something, which all her life had been fruitful of amusement; as well as of 'complication'.<sup>518</sup> She would not fill in a cheque and wrote orders for payment on sheets of ordinary paper until the Bank turned into a company, a source of annoyance to

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<sup>514</sup> CON.

<sup>515</sup> *The Times* (14 January 1874).

<sup>516</sup> *Art Journal*, NS XV (1876). For an account of Bristow's life see Josephine Gear, *Master or Servants: A Study of Selected English Painters & Their Patrons in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), p. 120. Gear qualifies the story however, Bristow was apparently possessive of his work and often used the slightest excuse not to part with it.

<sup>517</sup> R. M. See, *John James Masquerier and His Circle* (London: Connoisseur, 1922), p. 144.

<sup>518</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405.

her: 'to be made to use cheques was an infringement of her prerogative and an evidence to her mind that she no longer wielded the same power that she once possessed in the great banking house of Coutts'.<sup>519</sup> Osborne stated that Burdett Coutts was also capable of showing implacable hostility when crossed, although 'ordinarily' was not vindictive.<sup>520</sup> As an old lady she was described as 'kind, affectionate and tender hearted. Gentle and modest of demeanour' but 'she liked her own way and expected a great deal of consideration and deference'. In the Harrowby Archives a note made by the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Harrowby in 1963, records that an elderly man of ninety-one recalled having to attend Burdett Coutts when she arrived at the bank, as did everyone 'from the partners down on'.<sup>521</sup> She could not 'forgive any failure or any thing that might be construed as an injury to her own dignity and personality'. She was, moreover, a 'persistent hater...and found it difficult to forgive anyone who had offended her'.<sup>522</sup> Her great niece, Clara Burdett Patterson described her manner: 'She remained all her life as aristocratic in her grace, of manners of speech, of habits of thought,... her facility of expecting and winning obedience, and her gift of erecting impassable and imperceptible barriers against over-familiarity'.<sup>523</sup> It was these characteristics which came to the fore when she entered into a public dispute with the Scottish rustic genre painter Thomas Faed.

It is difficult to quantify the number of rustic genre paintings in the collection of Burdett Coutts, but the titles of many of her paintings certainly give the impression that they formed a very considerable part of her collection. Her fondness for rustic genre paintings reflects her attachment to Scottish painters, in turn, a reflection of her Scottish roots. Her great grandfather, John Coutts, had been Lord Provost of Edinburgh twice in the 1740s and she was following in the footsteps of her grandfather Thomas, created a Freeman of

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<sup>519</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405.

<sup>520</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405.

<sup>521</sup> Harrowby Archives Fourth Series, 1071.

<sup>522</sup> Burdett Patterson, *Angela Burdett Coutts*, p. 227.

<sup>523</sup> Burdett Patterson, *Angela Burdett Coutts*, p. 42.

the City of Edinburgh in 1813, when she herself received this honour in 1874.<sup>524</sup> In her acceptance speech she paid tribute to her grandfather and emphasised this family connection: 'From my grandfather I derived that position which has placed me under such gracious and kindly notice today and has placed in my hands the ample means which alone have enable me to further those public objects to which you have referred so kindly'. She also praised her grandfather's 'farsighted sagacity, prudential generosity, practical business habits and unswerving rectitude'.<sup>525</sup> Burdett Coutts commissioned a painting to mark the occasion by James Drummond showing herself and Mrs. Brown at their hotel window overlooking Princes Street (untraced, fig. 56 ).

Scottish artists were well represented in Burdett Coutts's collection and included some of the finest – Ramsay, Raeburn, Nasymth, Lauder and Wilkie. The two sketches by Wilkie in her collection related to two of Wilkie's most popular works, *The Blind Fiddler* and *The Rent Day*. In addition she possessed Wilkie's *The Duenna and Her Charge* (untraced), 1824, which belonged to the later period of his life. Other notable painters in this genre included the watercolourist William Shayer, William Turner of Oxford, Samuel Prout and William Hunt.<sup>526</sup> Many of these works are views of places in England Burdett Coutts visited such as Sussex, Norfolk and a series on London's bridges, essentially souvenirs.

Rustic genre painters are ultimately descendants of the Dutch and Flemish artists whom Burdett Coutts also favoured – Teniers, Both and De Hoogh. Amongst the more contemporary artists in her collection was also the French artist Edouard Frere (*Interior, A Woman Cooking*, untraced).<sup>527</sup> Interior genre painting in particular was extremely popular during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century and found favour at the highest level of society, counting among its patrons the Prince Regent, Sir Robert Peel and Sir George Beaumont, Wilkie's principal patron. The popularity of rustic genre again reflected the

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<sup>524</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 180 and Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>525</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 180.

<sup>526</sup> Originally belonged to Mrs. Brown, CON.

<sup>527</sup> Purchased at exhibition of *Works of the French School*, 1855, CON.

nostalgia for the pre-industrial world so prevalent during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>528</sup> Although the rural poor often lived in overcrowded and uninhabitable hovels, it was generally believed that the countryside was healthier than the cities, as summed up in the popular saying, 'Man made the Town, God made the Country'.<sup>529</sup> The old traditions and ways of life were disappearing and for the first time the urban population was overtaking the rural one.<sup>530</sup> Rustic genre painting reflected an idealized view of the country with healthy well-fed peasants in neat well-ordered cottages. Burdett Coutts shared this nostalgia for the well-ordered past as I will discuss further in Chapter Three. Attempts by artists such as Henry Wallis, in paintings such as *The Stonebreaker*, 1857 to show something of the reality of rural life met with little approval.<sup>531</sup> Pictures which sought to show poverty were unpopular generally and any attempts were usually quickly abandoned when they did not sell.<sup>532</sup>

Landscapes on the other hand were popular; they formed the majority of pictures exhibited at the Royal Academy throughout the Victorian period and they realized high honours and could fetch high prices.<sup>533</sup> Such pictures were often regarded as mere articles of furniture with which to dress a room, depicting pleasant untroubling scenes that the family could enjoy and which make few mental demands on the viewer.<sup>534</sup> The rose-coloured view of the country extended right through to landscape pictures generally. In fact, in reality the country was a focus of social unrest where the male farm labourer did not get the vote until 1884.<sup>535</sup> The reality was that the rural poor lived in cottages that were often tied to

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<sup>528</sup> Christopher Wood, *Paradise Lost: Paintings of English Country Life and Landscapes, 1850-1914* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1988), pp. 7, 8, 9.

<sup>529</sup> Wood, *Paradise Lost*, p. 9.

<sup>530</sup> Wood, *Paradise Lost*, p. 8.

<sup>531</sup> Quoted Wood, *Paradise Lost*, p. 14.

<sup>532</sup> Christiana Payne, *Rustic Simplicity: Scenes of Cottage Life in Nineteenth Century British Art* (Nottingham: Djanogly Art Gallery in Association with Lund Humphries Publishing, 1998), p. 25.

<sup>533</sup> Wood, *Paradise Lost*, p. 11

<sup>534</sup> Wood, *Paradise Lost*, p. 13.

<sup>535</sup> The male urban working class had been enfranchised in 1867, Wood, *Paradise Lost*, p. 25.

employment, and wages were low. Much of the countryside remained in the hands of an oppressive patriarchal society where the elderly often ended their days in the workhouse.<sup>536</sup> To the middle-class urban dweller, however, it seemed less threatening, more ordered and healthier; a way of life disappearing all too quickly, only to be replaced by chaos, overcrowding and social unrest.<sup>537</sup> It was felt that somehow feelings and emotions were 'purer' in the country and that if the good order experienced there could somehow be communicated to wider society the world would be a safer place.<sup>538</sup> Rustic genre depiction of poor rural life was generally rather formulaic, the agricultural poor are usually depicted in the interior of a cottage. The place might be humble but it would be portrayed as welcoming, neat and tidy. The children would be occupied in playing, wearing clean, if poor clothes, a bible in a prominent position would point to the family's respectability; the mother would invariably be involved in domestic duties such as cooking or looking after a baby; whilst the father, having returned from his day's work, would be shown enjoying the benefits of family life and a few hours of well-earned leisure.

Wilkie painted such scenes with a high degree of theatricality; the scene resembling a stage set with the characters demonstrating exaggerated gestures that rendered the picture easier to read. Often the poor family would be seen to extend charity to a neighbour or wanderer in need; the implication being that these people were poor, but resourceful and able bodied, and therefore able to help the less fortunate, when in reality an agricultural labourer usually did not earn enough to support his own wife and family let alone have extra to spare.<sup>539</sup> Such pictures also be read as studies for the human condition reflecting Christian values.<sup>540</sup> Passions or emotions were depicted in their purest form, and introduced a moral lesson

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<sup>536</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 17.

<sup>537</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 17.

<sup>538</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 17.

<sup>539</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 19.

<sup>540</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 22.

which often appealed to the Victorians.<sup>541</sup> In the work of their Flemish predecessors the moral lesson, if it appeared at all, was less obvious. The qualities best appreciated in genre were character, sentiment and truth.<sup>542</sup> A certain degree of poverty or distress was rendered acceptable in so far as they stimulated sympathy or sensibility in the beholder.<sup>543</sup> Alongside such unrealistic views of the country was the demand that the style of the painting indicate evidence of painstaking work by the artist to render the picture as realistic as possible.

Attention to detail was one of the characteristics of James Collinson, the only artist in Burdett Coutts's collection who can be said to have had any connection with a contemporary art movement, namely Pre-Raphaelitism.<sup>544</sup> Collinson (1825-1881), made his debut in 1847 with his painting *The Charity Boy's Debut* (untraced), where his close attention to detail was remarked upon by critics. His engagement to Christina Rossetti in 1849 resulted from his acquaintance with her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who championed his membership of the Brotherhood, although there seems to have been little enthusiasm amongst other members of the group.<sup>545</sup> Collinson's most pre-Raphaelite painting was *St Elizabeth of Hungary*, (untraced), 1851, but his other paintings of 1849-50 show the definite influence of Wilkie. Although Collinson was obviously aware of this tendency and resolved to 'cut the Wilkie style of Art for early Christian', genre painters such as Wilkie remained a strong influence upon him.<sup>546</sup> *The Writing Lesson*, 1855 (private collection, fig. 57), was one of two paintings by Collinson exhibited in 1855 at the Royal Academy, the other being *Temptation*. The *Art Journal* described *Temptation* as being undeniably genre in style, as is *The Writing Lesson*. Although John Ruskin found the latter a 'very careful and beautiful study ... a good piece of work throughout', he nevertheless also found the subject 'not interesting

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<sup>541</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 22.

<sup>542</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 8.

<sup>543</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 17.

<sup>544</sup> Ronald Parkinson, 'James Collinson' in Leslie Parris, *Pre-Raphaelite Papers* (London: Tate Gallery/Allen Lane, 1984), p. 61.

<sup>545</sup> Parkinson in Parris, *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, p. 62.

<sup>546</sup> P.R.B. Journal dated 6 May & 22 May 1850 quoted Parkinson in Parris, *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, p. 70.

enough to render the picture attractive'.<sup>547</sup>

*The Writing Lesson* depicts a rustic cottage in which a man sits on a wicker basket forming his letters on a wooden board which is being held for him by his teacher, a little girl. It is a cheerful cottage scene, very much in Wilkie's style. The cottage, though humble is clearly not wretched. The window is filled with flowers and the light spills in to illuminate the lesson, just as education is lightening the man's darkness. Collinson's attention to detail is revealed in his painting of the man's green corduroy jacket and red cloth hat, the earthen tiles of his floor and the plaid cloth and lantern on the wall. It has been pointed out that the furniture is rather fine for an illiterate labourer's cottage but it does give the artist the opportunity to reveal the love of detail for which he was noted.<sup>548</sup> The subject today may render the observer rather uncomfortable, but it must have struck a sympathetic chord with Burdett Coutts who probably bought it for its subject matter rather than style. Any traces of Collinson's Pre-Raphaelite membership are few, if any, and this picture falls very strongly into the category of conventional rustic genre.

David Wilkie was also very influential in the work of one of the later Scottish artists, Thomas Faed (1826-1900). Faed was one of a family of artists and had achieved early success in Edinburgh with scenes of rural life. Realizing that he might achieve greater success in London he joined the exodus of his fellow Scottish painters and left Edinburgh in 1850. Sometime in the early 1850s he was invited to a reception at Holly Lodge by Burdett Coutts and there met his future wife whom he married in November 1852.<sup>549</sup> In 1855 Faed had his first great success with his picture *The Mitherless Bairn*, this picture made his name and he became one of the most successful and popular painters of the Victorian period.<sup>550</sup> The painting shows the interior of a poor man's cottage, the mother holds a baby

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<sup>547</sup> E. T. Cook and A. D. O. Wedderburn, eds., *The Works of John Ruskin* (London: Smith, Elder, 1902-1912), Vol. XIV quoted Parkinson in Parris, *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, p. 74.

<sup>548</sup> Payne in Parris, *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, p. 61.

<sup>549</sup> Mary McKerrrow, *The Faeds: A Biography* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1982) p. 97.

<sup>550</sup> McKerrrow, *The Faeds*, p. 126.



whilst the grandmother and three children look upon a small boy who has entered through the open cottage door. The family's poor but happy appearance is a contrast to the plight of the young child before them. Faed stressed the sentiment in the story and it was this that appealed to the public. Although poorly positioned below the line at the Royal Academy, it was acclaimed the picture of the season. It drew the admiration of the press and the acclaim of the art world. Burdett Coutts shared in this admiration and commissioned a similar picture, *Home and the Homeless* (1856), (National Galleries of Scotland, fig. 58) for the sum of six hundred and thirty pounds.<sup>551</sup>

*Home and the Homeless* was exhibited in 1856 but never achieved the same level of success as its predecessor, Ruskin described it as 'a mere echo of the popular one of last year'.<sup>552</sup> Nevertheless *The Athenaeum* called the painting 'his best picture', and said that it recalled Wilkie, 'though perhaps less subtle than the expressions he delighted to convey'.<sup>553</sup> Again, it is a picture of contrasts. A cottage interior; the mother bringing the evening meal to the table, the father playing with his little daughter who sits on his knee. Beside him, the older children play with the family dog while a small puppy tries to reach his food from underneath the table but is prevented by its bars. To the right of the picture a widow crouches, whilst her small son approaches the table, clearly wishing to share the meal and be part of this happy scene but like the puppy he is excluded. Burdett Coutts's purchase of this picture was to have repercussions for Faed and for the situation regarding copyright in this country.

### **Thomas Faed: Copyright and Possession.**

The early Victorians had no scruples about purchasing copies of famous original pictures.<sup>554</sup> Burdett Coutts herself had several copies of Old Masters in her collection, several of which

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<sup>551</sup> CON.

<sup>552</sup> McKerrow, *The Faeds*, p. 97.

<sup>553</sup> *The Athenaeum* (10 May 1856), p. 591.

<sup>554</sup> Macleod, *Art and The Victorian Middle Class*, p. 16.

she had commissioned especially. Both Reynolds and Blake had condoned copying and prominent Pre-Raphaelites such as Rossetti and Holman Hunt were happy to produce several replicas of original paintings as the copies were as saleable as the originals; Rossetti painted eight versions of *Persephone* alone.<sup>555</sup> Hunt was later to attempt to excuse himself for this by stating that he had been under considerable pressure to do so and even the socialist Maddox Brown had few qualms: 'To do away with duplicates, were it possible, would only prevent people from owning small works they had an affection for and prejudice the painter's own position'.<sup>556</sup> Examples of confusion in connection with replicas were common. In February 1858 Thomas Woolner, wrote to Lady Trevelyan:

Millais has drifted, or rather sneaked into a dreadful mess with Agnew, - a keeper of a print and curiosity shop. Agnew paid £500, half the sum for *The (Escape of a) Heretic* but as it was so slovenly executed it was sent to Millais to touch up in certain parts, instead of doing so Millais painted a copy and sold it to Gambart, a picture dealer, although the copyright had been sold to Agnew. The consequence is that Millais has broken the treaty, and he must refund the £500, instead of receiving another £500, and take back *The Heretic*.<sup>557</sup>

A letter in the Harrowby archives reveals that George Richmond, also had to clarify the copyright situation in regard to one of his pictures:

The life size drawing which Lord Sandon sent to me is engraved and I am preparing a smaller copy of it for Sir Thos. Acland. The drawings that I make to be engraved are my own and not Sir J. Aclands, a small copy only is his, and as the original drawing is mine in any instance and after remains mine, for my sitters not knowing this it may be purchased at the price charged by me. <sup>558</sup>

The viability of replication of original works of art remained largely unquestioned until the

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<sup>555</sup> Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), I, pp. 131, 232.

<sup>556</sup> Macleod, *Art and The Victorian Middle Class*, p. 191.

<sup>557</sup> Quoted in Jeremy Maas, *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World* (London: Barrie & Jackson, 1975), p. 104.

<sup>558</sup> Letter from George Richmond to Lord Harrowby, 30 July 1862, Harrowby Archives Fourth Series, 1067 (1861-1864).

second half of the nineteenth century. As long as art was thought to be a transmitter of spiritual or educative values the question of originality was largely irrelevant.<sup>559</sup> However, increasingly more and more patrons were interested in owning the original and felt uneasy that the work of art that they had commissioned and paid for was now available on a similar basis to other people. A greater sense of exclusivity and the psychology of ownership came to the fore.<sup>560</sup> The patron had often done more than pay for a painting, they were often involved as part of the design process, offering advice (whether welcome or not), making comments and being involved at all stages of the execution. They felt that as participants in the creative process that the finished article was an exclusive creation between patron and artist rather than just a mere commodity.<sup>561</sup> Patrons could be exacting. In correspondence between Rossetti and his patron, Frederick Leland, Leland reveals himself to be concerned not just with size and orientation of figures in paintings but also going so far as to specify how the heads of figures should be depicted and the accessories. He also suggested titles of paintings to Whistler.<sup>562</sup> James Leathart, another major patron of Rossetti, at first tolerated duplicates but as he became increasingly involved in the art that entered his home he cautioned Rossetti: 'In the state in which it was shown to me I should feel no jealousy of it whoever had it but this would not be the case if it only differed from mine in size and price'.<sup>563</sup> Unfortunately we do not know to what extent Burdett Coutts was involved in the design process of her commissions, however, what evidence we have in relation to her other projects would suggest that she could have been a keen participant.

Alongside the demand for replicas by the original artist was a huge appetite for prints or

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<sup>559</sup> Macleod, *Art and The Victorian Middle Class*, p. 319.

<sup>560</sup> Macleod, *Art and The Victorian Middle Class*, p. 320.

<sup>561</sup> Macleod, *Art and The Victorian Middle Class*, pp. 322, 323.

<sup>562</sup> David Wayne Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 141.

<sup>563</sup> Letter from James Leathart to Rossetti dated 12 September 1862, University of Columbia, quoted McLeod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 322.

engravings from the vast multitude that could not afford an original work.<sup>564</sup> The engraving was an established method of reaching a wider audience than the traditional method of exhibition.<sup>565</sup> Engravings of popular contemporary art were affordable and brought artist's names and their works into the homes of the middle and working classes in the way that no other methods could have done.<sup>566</sup> Although steel engraving had been in production as far back as the sixteenth century it was only in the nineteenth century that it was to reach its zenith as a means of reproducing prints and book illustrations as it enabled the artist to combine other media such as line engraving, aquatint, stipple or mezzotint, all together in one plate.<sup>567</sup> Whilst the engraver could make large amounts of money from an engraving the artist held the copyright of the picture even if he sold the original painting.<sup>568</sup> The copyright was often retained or negotiated for separately, and it was the sale of these copyrights to publishers for engraving that enabled artists to obtain huge profits and make both them and their publishers and dealers wealthy.<sup>569</sup> Faed was a shrewd negotiator of copyright and a letter written in 1855 to the publisher Graves reveals him to have been aware very early on of how to obtain the best deals for his pictures:

I beg to offer you the copyright of *The Mitherless Bairn* now exhibited in the Royal Academy for the sum of 100 guineas, this sum leaves all that may be printed from the engraved plate to you or in other words no particular [illegible]. The money is to be paid now by a Bill payable at 14 monthly. You are to be allowed the picture for fourteen weeks for the purpose of making a watercolour copy and then to finish, from when the engraving is at a sufficiently advanced state. Also the picture in question may not be engraved by an engraver that I disapprove of [illegible] has already talked about that. I am quite satisfied with your brother and Mr. Atkinson. You will oblige me by an

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<sup>564</sup> Anthony Dyson, *Pictures into Print: The Nineteenth Century Engraving Trade* (London: Ferrand Press, 1984), p. 12.

<sup>565</sup> Dyson, *Pictures into Print*, p. 6.

<sup>566</sup> George P. Landow, *Victorian Art Criticism and the Rise of a Middle-Class Audience*, [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org), accessed 25 March 2010.

<sup>567</sup> R Lister, *Prints and Printmaking* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 54.

<sup>568</sup> Lister, *Prints and Printmaking*, p. 54.

<sup>569</sup> Lister, *Prints and Printmaking*, p. 60.

answer to the offer as soon as possible as I have promised to let Mr. Atkinson of Edinburgh know (or sent elsewhere).<sup>570</sup>

Henry Graves (1806-1892), was an important print seller based in Pall Mall.<sup>571</sup> He and others like him prospered because they understood what subjects were most likely to appeal to a wide audience: 'it was they who carried an artist's reputation into every home in the country and to all four corners of the world, it was they who brought prosperity to the artists and of course to themselves'.<sup>572</sup> In fact, Graves did purchase the copyright of *The Mitherless Bairn* and in August 1865 Faed again used Henry Graves and Co. to engrave his picture, *The Last of the Clan* for which he provided a reduced replica of the original for the engraver's use and to safeguard his own investment.

Faed often produced replicas of his pictures, but in 1856 when Burdett Coutts purchased *Home and the Homeless* she was evidently under the impression that she was purchasing the sole version of this picture. According to Charles Osborne, in a letter dated 22 August 1856 Faed told Burdett Coutts that 'He never made nor allows to be made copies of his pictures in oils'.<sup>573</sup> He did however retain his watercolour sketch of the original which he afterwards finished and exhibited at the Manchester Exhibition in 1858 and which was bought by a Mr. Graham. Burdett Coutts saw the picture and wrote to Faed. He replied:

The small picture exhibited at Manchester is the original sketch of your picture. And, except in feeling, is very different. For instance, the table cover is green, while in the finished work it is white, the background is even more unlike, yours having a window on the left, the other a door. There are a thousand other differences which on comparing them you will see, and if you have any desire to do so I will try and get the sketch – or rather small picture, for it is highly finished – for that purpose. I have only to add, that I make similar finished sketches of every picture I make.

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<sup>570</sup> Undated, 1855, British Library Graves Papers f. 245.

<sup>571</sup> Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 238.

<sup>572</sup> Maas, *Gambart*, p.28, quoted in Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, p. 238.

<sup>573</sup> CON.

Burdett Coutts was not appeased. She felt that the copyright value of her picture had been materially lessened and that the law which permitted an artist to make a finished duplicate of a picture he sold, after having given a definite assurance that he would not, was 'very unsatisfactory'.<sup>574</sup> There is evidence that Burdett Coutts was very conscious of her rights generally with regard to the pictures in her collection and guarded them strongly:

I have never given my permission direct or indirect, for my miniatures being engraved except to Mr. Foster and I am extremely vexed at what occurred between him and the Burlington Club. I thought it best to write at once. I declined to give permission. Just as I was leaving Cannes I received the enclosed. I intended to write and say I do not wish to give permission and also that I have given Mr. Foster the sole leave to engrave. Not being well, this letter, enclosed was not answered. So the Commission having had no answer are quite unjustified in their assertions... I am not now very well and cannot write much but Mr. Propert's unwarrantable action makes it imperative for me to write at once.<sup>575</sup>

In January 1856 a Committee for Copyright had been established.<sup>576</sup> This had been in response to the growing concern felt by painters and architects that they had no protection over their work. In the case of painters, there was nothing to stop the reproduction of their paintings being sold under another artist's name or being reproduced in an engraving without their permission and with no possibility of profiting by it..<sup>577</sup> Burdett Coutts obviously felt her grievance fell into the remit of the Committee and she laid the matter along with other cases, before former Chancellor and lawyer Lord Lyndhurst who in 1858 rose in the House of Lords to present a petition from the Society of Arts, the R.I.B.A and other representatives of the art world to pray for an amendment and extension of the

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<sup>574</sup> CON.

<sup>575</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to Charles Osborne, Hotel Continental, Paris dated 17 April 1880. Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

<sup>576</sup> *The Athenaeum* (2 January 1858), p.22 reported that the committee included such notable names as Alfred E. Chalon, D. Colnaghi, William Dyce, Charles Wentworth Dilke, Sir Charles Eastlake, J. Leighton, William Mulready, Richard Redgrave, William Charles Ross and R. S. Lauder.

<sup>577</sup> *The Athenaeum* (2 January 1858).

copyright laws'.<sup>578</sup> Lyndhurst went on to describe the current situation whereby an artist had no control over pirated copies of his works, pictures that were: 'the same size as the original, are painted on similar canvas and are subscribed with the name or peculiar mark of the artist to whom they are attributed. The artist is powerless, reluctant to get involved with the mechanics of Chancery and the public is defrauded'. Lyndhurst then proceeded to give an account of : 'a lady, of a very large fortune, who is remarkable for the admirable way in which she applies it, purchased a picture from an artist for six hundred pounds on the understanding that it should not be copied'.<sup>579</sup> He continued to describe the lady's surprise at finding at the Manchester exhibition a painting, 'which except of the subordinate details was an exact copy of her own'.<sup>580</sup> Another example given by Lyndhurst was that of a painting *Second Class – The Departure* by the artist Abraham Salomon (sic) which was purchased by a 'noble Marquis' and which again was replicated by the artist. Solomon was obliged to write to the newspapers to defend his good name. The picture had not in fact been sold to a noble marquis but to a well-known publisher who had commissioned him to paint a duplicate. Nobody had been misled.<sup>581</sup>

Faed was stung into a reply. On 31 July he wrote to *The Athenaeum* to set out his case. He stated that he had indeed sold the picture in April 1856 for a 'trifle' over the stated sum but with no understanding that it should not be copied.<sup>582</sup> He had requested permission from Miss Coutts to have a watercolour copy of the painting made for publishing purposes, and he had emphasised to her in correspondence that he never made copies of his pictures in oils:

but the small picture Miss Coutts saw in Manchester was not a copy. It was my original sketch, worked on and finished by me some time prior to my letter above referred to and that in a manner which entirely absolves it from the designation of a copy. In fact no two pictures bearing the relationship of

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<sup>578</sup> *The Athenaeum* (26 July 1858).

<sup>579</sup> *The Athenaeum* (26 July 1858).

<sup>580</sup> *The Athenaeum* (26 July 1858).

<sup>581</sup> *The Athenaeum* (21 August 1858).

<sup>582</sup> *The Athenaeum* (1 August 1858).

original sketch and picture could be more unlike in light and shadow, colour, form, etc, even to the disposing of minute detail.

He went on to remark on the very common-place nature of the artist working on and selling sketches both in Britain and abroad and 'should think that few eminent purchasers are unacquainted with it, or would think of explaining, even in a case where the original sketch and picture might be identical'.<sup>583</sup> The *Athenaeum* picked up on the flaw of Lyndhurst's example in the context of artistic fraud in its 31 July edition. It identified Thomas Faed as the artist, *Home and the Homeless* as the picture and Burdett Coutts as the lady purchaser:

How then does such a case prove the want of protection? Here the artist is exercising his own right and taking the reward of his happy labour and the public appreciation of his merit. Does Lord Lyndhurst contemplate depriving him of his source of income?... Then why introduce such a case?

Faed wrote again to the *Athenaeum* on 20 August.<sup>584</sup> He noted that the matter was still a subject of misunderstanding. He proposed that he would settle the matter finally by 'placing both original and sketch on exhibition together so that both public and the profession could judge whether they satisfy the allusions and the controversies which have gathered around them'.<sup>585</sup> Osborne noted that Burdett Coutts refused to accede to this, but *Home and the*

*Homeless*' she willingly allowed to be placed in the hands of Mr. Graves that it might be compared with the duplicate by artists and others specially interested in the dispute'.<sup>586</sup>

It is probable that Faed's 'duplicate' measuring 10 ½" x 15 ½" is the picture reproduced in Mary Mckerrow's study of the Faed family, signed and dated 1856 and inscribed 'R. in 1861'

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<sup>583</sup> *The Athenaeum* (31 July 1858).

<sup>584</sup> *The Athenaeum* (21 August 1858).

<sup>585</sup> *The Athenaeum* (21 August 1858).

<sup>586</sup> CON.



(fig. 59).<sup>587</sup> It seems to correspond to the differences Faed identifies in his letters and it is clearly by no means a copy of the original. In fact the whole question of when a version becomes a replica is highly fraught. Rossetti produced some four hundred and fifty works, excluding portraits (of which he made no replicas) and of these it has been estimated that roughly fifteen per cent could be called replicas but others might call some of them 'versions'.<sup>588</sup> Burdett Coutts evidently felt that Faed had crossed her definition and, given her very strong awareness of her status and the rights owing to it is very clear why she felt affronted. Rossetti understood his repetitions to reflect a pursuit after the 'ideal' but the fact is that their production was strongly linked to money.<sup>589</sup>

Faed was a victim of his tendency to replicate later in his career when *The Mitherless Bairn* came up for sale at Christies in 1886. A rumour arose that the original was in America and that the picture on sale was therefore only a copy.<sup>590</sup> The painting was subsequently sold for the not inconsiderable sum of nine hundred guineas but Faed indignantly wrote to confirm that:

a rumour was persistently circulated that the picture referred to was not the original, the 'real' being somewhere in America and a much larger work. This rumour had reached the ears of Messrs. Agnews and others, and to these I have a certificate of the originality of the picture sold on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, and at the same time was informed that it was my exhibition work of 1855, and in that connection with it there existed two finished sketches on a small scale. All other works claiming to be mine are spurious.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Another picture, *Cottage Piety*, which was signed and dated 1849 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1851 was subsequently inscribed 'Repainted 1865 – Faed', McKerrow, *The Faeds*, p. 98.

<sup>588</sup> Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians*, p. 127.

<sup>589</sup> Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians*, p. 132.

<sup>590</sup> McKerrow, *The Faeds*, p. 97.

<sup>591</sup> The government of Victoria, Australia, bought the picture which is now in the National Gallery, Melbourne. A reduced replica, 13 ¾ x 19 ½" signed and dated Thomas Faed is in the Art Gallery, Brighton. A picture called *The Mitherless Bairn*, oil on canvas, 36 ½ x 52 ¾" signed T Faed, undated, is in the Smith Art Gallery, Brighouse, Yorkshire. A sketch and a study for the picture are also mentioned as sold in *Graves Art Sales Index* 1867 and 1868. These take no accounts of fakes of which there were many. McKerrow, *The Faeds*, pp. 97, 98.

Faed's career was not harmed by the controversy. He sold the copyright of the *Mitherless Bairn* for one hundred pounds and in 1865 *The Last of the Clan* to the dealer Louis Flatow for two thousand guineas, including copyright.<sup>592</sup> This was the highest price yet received by Faed. Flatow was perhaps the stereotypical dealer, an illiterate Prussian-Jewish émigré who had originally practiced as a chiropodist before dealing in fake Raphaels and Titians.<sup>593</sup> He later turned to the sale of modern pictures and became hugely successful. From 1859 until his death in 1867 he made annual speculative purchases of paintings by Faed. When he concluded an agreement with the print sellers Henry Graves & Co to engrave the *Last of the Clan*, he commissioned Faed to paint a reduced autograph replica.<sup>594</sup>

Burdett Coutts also had copyright grievances with the artist R. S. Lauder who, ironically, sat on the Artistic Copyright Committee.<sup>595</sup> Osborne states that Burdett Coutts had purchased his painting *Christ Walking on the Water* from the Portland Gallery for four hundred pounds in 1851. As she wrote to the Committee:

some years ago I purchased a picture of *Christ Walking on the Water* from Mr. Farrow, the picture dealer, painted by R. S. Lauder. I paid four hundred pounds for it. After-wards (sic) I was much surprised to find that an engraving of it existed and on enquiry at Graves I learned that that had been made from a duplicate of my picture, in the possession of Mr. Wallace. I further understood that a third picture also painted by Mr. Lauder of the same subject was in another's possession.<sup>596</sup>

Unfortunately for Burdett Coutts, such issues were not dealt with until the Copyright Commission of 1897 when ownership of a work of art also conferred copyright.<sup>597</sup> Until

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<sup>592</sup> Helen Smailes and Mungo Campbell, *Hidden Assets: Scottish Paintings from the Flemings Collection* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1995), p. 46.

<sup>593</sup> Smailes and Campbell, *Hidden Assets*, p. 46.

<sup>594</sup> Smailes and Campbell, *Hidden Assets*, p. 46.

<sup>595</sup> *The Athenaeum* (21 January 1858).

<sup>596</sup> CON.

<sup>597</sup> Simon Stokes, *Art and Copyright* (Oxford & Oregon, Hart Publishing, 2001), p. 23.

then copyright was invested in the originator of the picture, not in its owner, and painters were able to continue to sell copies and the right to engrave a work of art for considerable amounts of money.<sup>598</sup> The 1862 Copyright Act merely extended copyright to include paintings, drawings and photographs for the author's life plus seven years. Although the copyright remained in the hands of the painter unless sold, it did provide that the artist make no replicas, even in part of his own work, once having disposed of the copyright. As the *Art Journal* reported, any sale or retention of the copyright had to be in writing. If not, the copyright was vested in neither party, neither possessor nor painter could use it unless one obtained the consent of the other.<sup>599</sup> In all cases, in order to secure the copyright there had

to be an 'entry' of the same at Stationer's Hall. The situation remained ill-defined and easily breached.

Although Thomas Faed was a Victorian success story- he left fifty seven thousand pounds - the critics had turned against him and rustic genre painting by the time of his death in 1900.<sup>600</sup> During the 1850s and 60s it began to be attacked for its sentimentality and lack of realism.<sup>601</sup> It became to be associated with 'female taste' and its very popularity was seen as a failing.<sup>602</sup> The growth of the aesthetic movement also meant that true appreciation of art was again being perceived as an elitist activity; only 'simple observers' such as children, women and the working classes liked rustic genre painting.<sup>603</sup> Its moral messages were also deemed unacceptable, especially when Whistler decreed that art had no place as a teacher of

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<sup>598</sup> Ernest Gambart acquired the engraving rights to Frith's *Derby Day* in 1859 for £1,500 and in 1860 purchased Holman Hunt's *Christ in the Temple* for £5,500. The average print sellers' income in 1840 was calculated to be £16,000, Messrs. Graves & Co reached an income of £22,000 in 1844 at a time when an annual income of £250 could support a family of three children and a maidservant. H. Guise, *Great Victorian Engravings: A Collectors Guide* (London: Astragal Books, 1980), p. 9.

<sup>599</sup> *Art Journal* (1 August 1862), p. 194.

<sup>600</sup> McKerrow, *The Faeds*, p. 126.

<sup>601</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 31.

<sup>602</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 31.

<sup>603</sup> Payne, *Rustic Simplicity*, p. 33.

morality or anything else for that matter. It was too closely connected with social initiatives to bring art successfully to the masses and aesthetic movement artists such as Leighton and Whistler took care that the works they produced for establishments such as the South London Museum were very different to those produced for their wealthy patrons.

A great animal lover, Burdett Coutts also commissioned portraits of her dogs Ben and Pet, which Hodges painted for her in 1875 and for which 'she did not ask the price but voluntarily sent 200 guineas as an expression of her satisfaction with the picture'.<sup>604</sup> Burdett Coutts gave the artist the equivalent of more than seventeen thousand pounds today which suggests that she was a generous patron.<sup>605</sup> In addition to Hodge's pictures of her pet dogs, there were several studies of other pets by other artists. An increase in concern for animals during the Victorian period was particularly apparent in the growth in the popularity of dogs, in the rise of the dog show and the painting of pets and dogs in particular.<sup>606</sup> Queen Victoria, another lover of animals, was an important influence here and Burdett Coutts shared in her appreciation for this genre; she owned pet paintings by some of the best known animal artists. In 1876 Victoria presented Burdett Coutts with a picture of her four favourite dogs in a picture by Gourley Steell and C. R. B. Barbour.<sup>607</sup> In particular Burdett Coutts commissioned an animal painter, Edmund Caldwell (fl. 1880-1920, d.1930). According to Mary Spencer-Warren, Caldwell was being spoken of as 'the next Landseer'.<sup>608</sup> Certainly Burdett Coutts appreciated his work:

I really do not know how to thank you for the charming remembrances you sent me. You have no idea how the delightful characteristic group of our dear pets illuminated our very quiet Christmas in this beautiful but out of the way

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<sup>604</sup> CON.

<sup>605</sup> CON.

<sup>606</sup> William Secord, *Dog Painting 1840-1940: A Social History of the Dog in Art* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collector's Club, 1992), p. 120.

<sup>607</sup> CON.

<sup>608</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p.356.

county.<sup>609</sup>

Nor were pictures the only medium in which Burdett Coutts commissioned representations of her pets.<sup>610</sup> In 1997 a small bronze of *Our Little Fan*, was auctioned at Sotheby's in Gleneagles, Perthshire, made by George Carter, the son of a south London cobbler, who became an important designer for the jewellers and silversmiths Hunt & Roxhall. Although exhibited at the Royal Academy, it had later disappeared and was not rediscovered until 1997.<sup>611</sup> Most famously, however, in 1872 Burdett Coutts commissioned the statue of *Greyfriars Bobby* (illus. 60).

### **Greyfriars Bobby**

In 1858 a police night-watchman, John Grey, known as 'Auld Jack' (although he was only forty-five), died of pulmonary tuberculosis. He and his two year old dog, Bobby, a Skye Terrier, had been familiar figures in the Old Town of Edinburgh, and the dog was allowed, as was tradition, to attend his master's funeral in Greyfriars Kirkyard.<sup>612</sup> Once the funeral was over, however, the dog refused to leave the graveside, resisting any attempts to remove him. In fact, Bobby maintained his vigil for many years and became a familiar sight; when he was not at the grave people fed and sheltered him. Such was the affection in which he was held that when a licence fee was introduced in the city in March 1867 and the penalty for non-compliance was death of the dog, the Lord Provost, William Chambers, offered to pay for Bobby's licence every year and provided him with a collar.<sup>613</sup> When, five years later

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<sup>609</sup> Letter dated 13 January 1893, Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>610</sup> *The Times* (4 August 1997).

<sup>611</sup> *The Times* (4 August 1997).

<sup>612</sup> *Greyfriars Bobby: The Story of the Faithful Skye Terrier* (Society of Friends of the Kirk of the Greyfriars, 1997). Biographical Cuttings, vol. 2, B.E.A (Edinburgh City Libraries).

<sup>613</sup> Society of Friends of the Kirk.

in 1872, the dog died he was buried in a flowerbed near the door of the church.<sup>614</sup> Although doubts as to the veracity of the tale were voiced in the past, the story is likely to be true.<sup>615</sup> Such devotion in a small animal struck a chord. Queen Victoria herself expressed an interest in the dog's welfare and it is not surprising that such a passionate devotee of animals as Angela Burdett Coutts should also be attracted to the story and in 1871 she visited the dog.<sup>616</sup> There is a fictional account in the children's classic novel *Greyfriars Bobby* by Eleanor Atkinson (1865-1942), written in 1912, of the 'Grand Leddy' who visited the small dog and proposed to erect a monument to him and a painting by Gourley Stele (sic) - 'the very person'.<sup>617</sup> Although there is no record of this painting being in Burdett Coutts's collection, she certainly possessed more than one portrait of the dog. Sir Joseph Noel Paton (1821-1900) wrote on the subject to Professor John Blackie (1809-1895):

My Dear Professor Blackie, Herewith I send you, at last the sketch of poor 'Bobbie' – it has been much on my conscience but the delay has been unavoidable. I wish the thing had been more worthy of the acceptance of the good woman (and what man is capable of comprehending how good a good woman is) for whom it is intended, but something of the likeness and expression of the big hearted beastie has I think been caught, and I venture to hope that it may compensate for its worthlessness as a "Work of Art".<sup>618</sup>

Paton was a painter, sculptor, and illustrator. There is nothing to suggest that he had a particular strength or interest in depicting animals, but he was acknowledged as a powerful observer and his work is often meticulously detailed.<sup>619</sup> His later work was often of religious

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<sup>614</sup> Society of Friends of the Kirk.

<sup>615</sup> In 1932 letters to *The Weekly Scotsman*, cast doubt on the story. A grandson of one of Bobby's chief protectors, Mr. Trail, wrote to the newspaper to state that there were many stray dogs at this time in the kirkyard and that none had maintained such a vigil. He added that doubts had been cast on the story in the 1870s when the memorial statue had been erected but had been waived aside as spoiling a good story. *The Weekly Scotsman* (16 January 1932).

<sup>616</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 172-4.

<sup>617</sup> Eleanor Atkinson, *Greyfriars Bobby* (London: Penguin Original Classics, 1996, orig. pub. 1912), p. 206.

<sup>618</sup> Letter from Joseph Paton to John Blackie dated 22 December 1873, Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

<sup>619</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 43, pp. 62, 63.

subjects and this might well have brought him to Burdett Coutts's attention. She was certainly well acquainted with his friend Professor Blackie. An extremely popular man he worked hard to found and endow a chair in Celtic studies at Edinburgh University which he instituted in 1882, shortly after he became an emeritus professor there.<sup>620</sup> Indeed, a letter from Burdett Coutts, dated 1873, asks him whether he would translate some words into Gaelic for her.<sup>621</sup> Paton's workbooks for 1873 do not refer to this sketch of Bobby and therefore it is likely that it was executed as a gift for Burdett Coutts.<sup>622</sup> He certainly executed other work for her: 'Mr Paton's picture has come in very well copied'.<sup>623</sup>

On October 1871 Edinburgh Town Council noted that the Baroness Burdett Coutts presented her compliments to the Lord Provost and referred to a conversation in which she had indicated a desire to erect a drinking fountain to record 'the curious and interesting facts connected with a dog in the Greyfriars Church yard'.<sup>624</sup> It went on to record that she had spoken with Mr. Brodie who would explain the design for the fountain and submit it to the Lord Provost and Council for approval.<sup>625</sup>

The sculptor chosen, William Brodie (1815-1881), was the son of a shipmaster. By the time Burdett Coutts chose him he was an established sculptor with many prestigious commissions behind him. She expressed her wish to have the statue placed nearly opposite the entrance to the churchyard where a lamp currently stood, she hoped that:

the Fountain will not simply serve to perpetuate a touching and remarkable instance of the power of affection and fidelity in the Dog but it may serve also to create a sympathy and foster those feelings of humanity and humane

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<sup>620</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 5, pp. 956-958.

<sup>621</sup> National Library of Scotland 77. MS2631.80.

<sup>622</sup> Noel-Paton and Campbell, *Noel Paton*, p. 97.

<sup>623</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts to Lord Harrowby, Edinburgh, April 1893, Harrowby MSS 4<sup>th</sup> Series. 1071.

<sup>624</sup> Edinburgh Town Council, Minute Book. Vol. 305 (SL 7/1/305), dated 31 October 1871.

<sup>625</sup> Edinburgh Town Council Minute Book, (SL 7/1/305).

consideration of the creatures upon whom man is so dependant of the comforts and necessities of life and whose claims are too often overlooked.<sup>626</sup>

These sentiments are typical of Burdett Coutts, both of her regard for animals and also that she should seek to commemorate the dog in the practical form of a drinking fountain.<sup>627</sup>

The progress of the work was widely reported in newspapers. *The Scotsman* recorded that the design for the memorial fountain consisted of a seven-foot high structure of red Westmoreland granite. It went on to describe that the basin was to be octagonal, three feet in diameter and constructed of axed granite, this was to be the canine drinking fountain. From the centre was a cylindrical column of polished granite two foot high and around twenty inches in diameter terminating in a moulding at the top on which stood the main basin of the fountain, circular in shape and classic in design with a diameter of between three and four feet. A second column, eighteen inches high and twelve inches in diameter rises out of the upper basin and supports a bronze figure of the dog. The article concluded that the fountain was to stand at the corner of George IV Bridge and Candlemaker Row.<sup>628</sup> In January 1873 Burdett Coutts wrote to Brodie from Torquay informing him of Bobby's death:

Poor old Bobby's long watch is over – I am so glad. You had a good likeness whilst he was still waiting for his master...Mr. Thomson and Mr. Chambers both wrote to tell me that he was buried near the Greyfriars in a small garden plot and his collar preserved – Mr. Chambers told me that the likeness you have made is excellent.

On 17 January 1873 *The Scotsman* reported Bobby's death and stated that Mr Brodie had successfully modelled Bobby's figure. A later report, on 15 November 1873 revealed that the memorial was to be exactly as first recorded and to be inscribed with the words: 'A tribute to the affectionate fidelity of Greyfriars Bobby. In 1858 this faithful dog followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars churchyard and lingered near the spot until his

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<sup>626</sup> Edinburgh Town Council, Minute Book, (SL7/1/305).

<sup>627</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (8 September 1875), p. 7. In addition to her London fountains in Regent's Park and Victoria Park, Burdett Coutts erected at least one more, in Manchester.

<sup>628</sup> *The Scotsman* (17 November 1872).



death in 1872. With permission erected by Baroness Burdett Coutts'.<sup>629</sup> Burdett Coutts was also careful to ensure that bronze plaques with the coats of arms of Edinburgh and Burdett Coutts were included to emphasise her connections with Edinburgh and her patronage. The memorial fountain was unveiled without any ceremony on 15 November 1873, but given the news coverage it had already received, additional publicity was probably superfluous. The fountain soon proved popular: 'Large numbers of persons visited the place...Around the fountain yesterday were also to be seen admiring crowds, the juvenile portion of which gave expression to the delight with which they regarded the figure of the little shaggy terrier perched on the top of the structure'.<sup>630</sup>

In erecting this, and other drinking fountains Burdett Coutts was taking part as a private patron in a public service initiative which had come to the fore in the mid nineteenth century. The Board of Works, local authorities and a private philanthropic association undertook a large-scale project to provide drinking fountains throughout the capital and other cities.<sup>631</sup> Sometimes designed by established artists and often unveiled with great ceremony, these public drinking fountain were undertaken in conjunction with the vast new sewerage system which was also being constructed beneath the streets of London.<sup>632</sup> Both initiatives were part of a commitment to create new order and modernisation of an until then increasingly anarchic urban sprawl, which, when committed onto new ordnance survey maps enabled the reader to know and comprehend the city in a way which had never been attempted before.<sup>633</sup> Although the drinking fountain element of the memorial closed in 1957 owing to public health concerns, the monument to the little dog remains one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city, even though the name of its donor is perhaps over-looked. The drinking fountain served both as a monument to a popular figure but also

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<sup>629</sup> Also inscribed on the sculpture, 'Greyfriars Bobby, from the life just before his death'. Two further granite stones erected in 1981 and 1991 commemorate the story.

<sup>630</sup> *The Scotsman* (17 November 1873).

<sup>631</sup> Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth Century London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 23.

<sup>632</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 22.

<sup>633</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 24.

as an act of public philanthropy and the following chapters will discuss Burdett Coutts as a philanthropist and her participation in architectural practice as an aspect of this philanthropy.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### ANGELA BURDETT COUTTS: HEIRESS AND PHILANTHROPIST

##### **Heiress**

Angela Burdett Coutts owed her good fortune to the legacy she inherited from her step-grandmother, Harriot.<sup>634</sup> She inherited more than money from the Coutts side of the family however, indeed for many people she personified Coutts Bank and she took her heritage very seriously. Following on from Thomas Coutts's death in February 1822 his fortune was valued for probate at nine hundred thousand pounds (excluding freeholds and land).<sup>635</sup> He left everything to his wife Harriot, including his fifty per cent share in the Bank and she gave each step-daughter a yearly allowance of ten thousand pounds.<sup>636</sup> Harriot was in effect senior partner in Coutts Bank with the power to choose who would succeed her.<sup>637</sup> Although there was a protest that the will was unjust and should be set aside by Act of Parliament on the grounds that Thomas's children by his first marriage had been totally ignored, it was ultimately unchallenged by the family.<sup>638</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts later asserted

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<sup>634</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 49.

<sup>635</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 41.

<sup>636</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 260.

<sup>637</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 41.

<sup>638</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 313.

that the generous allowances paid to Fanny, Sophia and Susan out of Harriot's annual income of roughly sixty thousand pounds from the bank were a form of 'buying off' their opposition to the terms of the will.<sup>639</sup>

The young Angela Burdett had ample time to observe Harriot's character. Harriot possessed a generous nature, which often expressed itself in spontaneous and extravagant acts of kindness and charity which were sometimes ill-thought out and abused but continued throughout her life. Her generosity may have inspired her step-granddaughter in her own philanthropy but the nature of it may well have led to Burdett Coutts's more cautious methods, or as one observer put it 'sympathy controlled by sense'.<sup>640</sup> Always determined to do what she imagined her late husband would have wished, Harriot took her position at the Bank very seriously and played a large part in the appointment of junior partners.<sup>641</sup> As someone who had risen from a very humble background to great wealth and latterly, a title, she would naturally have attracted jealousy. Her generous figure and maiden name were a gift to pamphleteers. She was called 'a vile, wicked lying She-Pharisee, a wanton Harlot' and a 'fat greasy voluptuous Mother Pumpkin Croesus'.<sup>642</sup> Her refusal to fade into the background, coupled with an indiscriminate and wild generosity fuelled the situation. The attacks upon her intensified when it was announced in 1827 that she would marry the Duke of St Albans who was some twenty years younger than herself.<sup>643</sup> In 1829 she celebrated her second wedding anniversary and the event was duly waspishly reported:

The Duchess of St Albans...gave a great entertainment at Holly Lodge, Highgate, it being the anniversary of her wedding day - 600 fashionable present, the usual mummery - 'that is bred in the bone will appear in the flesh' etc but there was no nonsensical speechifying - nothing like the rubbishing humbug which distinguished last years exhibition. The lady would do well in her exaltation to take example of the late Duchess of Derby - the present Countess of Craven

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<sup>639</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold* p. 33.

<sup>640</sup> T. P.O' Connor in *P.T.O.* (12 January 1907) in Heal Archive, Camden.

<sup>641</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 268.

<sup>642</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 268.

<sup>643</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 271.

- Lady Thurlow etc - though ranking far beyond Miss Mellon in respectability of birth and in dramatic talent these ladies have never, in their elevation, exhibited the least symptoms of forgetting that obscurity from which a good fortune had lifted them.<sup>644</sup>

At the same event Burdett Coutts's cousin, Frances Sandon, confessed to her mother that although it was 'a very pretty sight' and she had been invited to sit with royalty, she had felt obliged to speak to her hostess but 'only gave myself as much trouble as civility required'.<sup>645</sup>

Harriot's vilification would appear to be as a result of several factors. As the newspaper report suggests, actresses marrying into the gentry were not unusual and had a long history, but if society was to tolerate their good fortune which was based upon their sexual allure, it was vital that they remained comparatively silent and not draw attention to themselves and certainly not flaunt their good fortune; basically they should 'know their place'. Eliza O'Neill (1791-1872), a noted actress of the period, married an MP and was attacked for her reputed avarice after she became Lady Becher.<sup>646</sup> Dorothy Jordan (1761-1819), a more celebrated actress, became the long-term mistress of William, Duke of Clarence and bore him ten children but when the news of her having left one lover to become the Duke's mistress was first known she was attacked with a vicious savagery in the popular press.<sup>647</sup> Harriot's interest and involvement in the running of the bank could also have provoked attacks, although as Kathryn Gleadle has observed, women were often involved in family businesses in the early nineteenth century, it was only as the century wore on that attitudes began to change.<sup>648</sup> Spinsters played an important part in local money lending and their capital was often used in family businesses or the local economy.<sup>649</sup> Aristocratic women

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<sup>644</sup> Untitled newspaper cutting dated March 1829, Heal Archive A1V/107 Camden Local History Archive.

<sup>645</sup> Letter from Lady Frances Sandon to the Dowager Marchioness of Bute, 17 June 1829 in Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 40.

<sup>646</sup> Article from the Princess Grace Irish Library, Monaco, [www.monaco.mc/pglib](http://www.monaco.mc/pglib) accessed 10 November 2010. The reputation was probably based on her negotiations with a theatre manager to bring several indigent relations who she supported with her to London.

<sup>647</sup> Claire Tomalin, *Mrs. Jordan's Profession* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 120-123.

<sup>648</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Palgrave, 1988), p. 57.

<sup>649</sup> Bridget Hill, *Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1660-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 43.

often assumed responsibility for family estates on the deaths of their husbands if not before - the Duchess of Athole undertook most of the business of the family estate and merely informed her husband of her decisions.<sup>650</sup> Certainly, whilst involvement in a bank would have been extremely unusual, it was not unknown. Harriot was not the first woman to be senior partner of a major bank in this period. Sarah, Countess of Jersey (1785-1867), is chiefly known today for her patronage of the fashionable Almack's Assembly Rooms in the 1820s but she was also the owner and senior partner of the London banking house, Child & Co. It would seem that she took the business seriously. She lunched weekly at the bank with the other partners and closely followed the profit and loss account.<sup>651</sup> On her birthday, when salaries were reviewed, it was she who decided who was to receive an increase or decrease.<sup>652</sup> Her support of Queen Caroline led to her own vilification in the press in the 1820s.<sup>653</sup> In Harriot's case the marriage to a much younger man would have seriously discomfited society. It would seem that the attacks upon Harriot were likely to be not just as a result of her good fortune, nor because she was a woman involved in the banking world but primarily as a woman drawing attention to herself. Despite such personal animosity, however, Harriot's generosity continued throughout her life until finally on 6 August 1837 she died at Stratton Street and was buried in the St Albans' family vault in Lincolnshire.<sup>654</sup>

Four days later, Harriot's will was read. Angela Burdett became, at the age of twenty three, in the words of her father 'the richest woman in all England'.<sup>655</sup> There were conditions: Angela Burdett had to take the additional surname of Coutts within six months and in the

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<sup>650</sup> Gleadle, *British Women*, p. 56.

<sup>651</sup> Phillip Clarke, *Child & Co 1673-1973: The First House in the City* (London: 1973), p. 37.

<sup>652</sup> Clarke, *Child & Co*, p. 37.

<sup>653</sup> James N. McCord, 'Taming the Female Politician in Early Nineteenth-Century England: John Bull versus Lady Jersey', *Journal of Women's History*, Vol., 13, No. 4 (Winter 2002), pp. 31-53.

<sup>654</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 44.

<sup>655</sup> A note in the Harrowby archive states that Hannah Brown plied the Duchess with alcohol on her deathbed and guided her hand in respect of the signature. This was apparently in return for jewels to which she was particularly fond. This story is completely at odds with everything one reads about Hannah Brown's character.

event of her marrying an 'alien' (foreigner) she would forfeit all benefits under the will. On her death the trust was to pass to her son if she had one, failing that to her sisters Joanna and Clara and their respective sons, who would be bound by the same clauses.<sup>656</sup> Harriot's personal estate was valued at just under six hundred thousand pounds - not all of which went to Angela Burdett - and her annual income from the bank was in the region of fifty thousand pounds. Angela Burdett's fortune was estimated to amount to £1,800,000.<sup>657</sup> She

asserted her independence by assuming the surname Coutts by royal licence on 14 September 1837 and by leaving the family home to take up her grandfather's residence at 1 Stratton Street which was to remain her home for the rest of her life.

According to Healey, Burdett Coutts once wrote that her wealth had brought her little real happiness.<sup>658</sup> Outside of her family, her closest relationship throughout most of her life was with her governess and companion Hannah Brown.<sup>659</sup> She remained rather an isolated figure, separated by her great wealth even from her sisters. Although highly educated and intelligent, and despite the flattering sketch of her as a young girl by J. J. Masquerier (fig. 61), she was not considered 'a beauty' in Victorian terms, being relatively tall, thin and rather angular and suffering from a poor complexion throughout her life.<sup>660</sup> Through her father she met many distinguished men, including Samuel Rogers, Michael Faraday, Charles Babbage and Benjamin Disraeli. At the outset of his political life Disraeli had canvassed for Sir Francis Burdett. Indeed he saw himself as having had a pivotal role in the 1837 election: 'Distinguished myself very much with the election of Burdett for Westminster, the success mainly attributable to myself'.<sup>661</sup> According to Healey many young men felt almost a duty to

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<sup>656</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 45.

<sup>657</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 47.

<sup>658</sup> Unreferenced, Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 52.

<sup>659</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>660</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 52.

<sup>661</sup> Diary entry for May 1837 from 'The Mutilated Diary' p. 371 quoted W. F. Money Penny and G. F. Buckle,

propose to her in order to help their families and Disraeli may well have considered this himself.<sup>662</sup> As a young woman she was also stalked by Richard Dunn, a bankrupt Irish barrister, for several years.<sup>663</sup> It was only when he turned his attention to a member of the royal family that he was declared insane and confined to an asylum.<sup>664</sup> These stressful situations could only have fuelled her sense of isolation.

A happier relationship was that of Burdett Coutts and Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, a relationship reflected in a number of portraits in her collection. Although their social circles were very different, Burdett Coutts began to consult him on charity matters and on issues relating to the Bank and from 1846 until his death six years later they enjoyed a long and close relationship and an almost daily correspondence.<sup>665</sup> Unfortunately, as was his usual custom, he destroyed all her letters to him. The closeness of the relationship was such that there was increasing speculation that they might marry and there is evidence that Burdett Coutts may well have proposed marriage to him despite the thirty five year age gap.<sup>666</sup>

In his biographical notes Osborne remarked on her obstinacy and refusal to acknowledge faults in people for whom she had developed an affection.<sup>667</sup> An example of this was Louis Napoleon, whom she met as a girl and who remained a close friend till his death in 1873.<sup>668</sup> Her friendship was such that *The New York Times*, quoting from the London newspaper *The Truth*, suggested that the clause prohibiting marriage to an 'alien' was directed against the

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*The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, rev. ed. 2 vols. (1929), quoted in Christopher Hibbert, *Disraeli: A Personal History* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 104.

<sup>662</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 52, 53.

<sup>663</sup> For a full account see Orton, *Made of Gold*, pp. 62-74.

<sup>664</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 74.

<sup>665</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 112.

<sup>666</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 90, 91.

<sup>667</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>668</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

'late Louis Napoleon who was vehemently suspected of designs on the golden hoards of Mr. Coutts'.<sup>669</sup> Whatever the matter, she considered him maligned and misrepresented and never questioned any of his actions.<sup>670</sup> He personified the type of man she most admired, decisive men of action, brave and chivalrous – it is easy to see similarities with her image of her father. Although Osborne states that she was not vindictive, it would appear that this blindness to other points of view, once her mind was made up, led to harsh judgements on other people, especially where criticism of her father was concerned.<sup>671</sup> This is exemplified by her dislike of the poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth. The latter she referred to as 'a peasant, though I suppose he had genius'.<sup>672</sup> Osborne never discovered the reason for the dislike but concluded that it may have been due to political attacks by both poets on Sir Francis.<sup>673</sup>

Undoubtedly Angela Burdett Coutts's most controversial relationship however was with the man who she was to marry at the age of sixty-nine, William Ashmead Bartlett, an American by birth and thirty-seven years her junior. She had known Ashmead since he was a boy living in Torquay with his mother and older brother. Originally from the United States, Ashmead's father had died a year after his birth in 1851.<sup>674</sup> Upon the outbreak of the Civil War the family had left for Britain and settled in Devon. A frequent visitor to Torquay, Burdett Coutts had attended a prize-giving and having been impressed with the young boy, offered to help with his education.<sup>675</sup> Ashmead's re emergence into Burdett Coutts's life coincided with a period which saw the ambivalent relationship between Britain and its

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<sup>669</sup> *The New York Times* (4 January 1882), quoting from *The Truth*, a weekly radical journal established in 1877 by the politician and writer Henry Labouchere, who was frequently sued for libel.

<sup>670</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A

<sup>671</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>672</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>673</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>674</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 270.

<sup>675</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 220.



former colony reach a mutually beneficial situation.<sup>676</sup> There was an uneasy fascination between the inhabitants of the two countries and it became a fashionable destination for the wealthy. Whilst some enthused, perhaps more typical of the aristocratic visitor's response was described by Henry James in his tale of two young English aristocrats, Lord Lambeth and Percy Beaumont, visiting the United States for the first time:

The young men had exchanged few observations, but in crossing Union Square, in front of the monument to Washington - in the very shadow indeed projected by the image of the *pater patriae* - one of them remarked to the other: - 'Awfully rum place'.<sup>677</sup>

At the same time the insecurities of the average American made them vulnerable to the attractions of the 'old world'. Of the big U.S cities, only New York could claim to be a global city by the 1870s but the inhabitants felt themselves provincial in comparison with the sophistication of Europe.<sup>678</sup> The super-rich business families of New York, the Astors, Rockefellers, Stuyvesants and Vanderbilts flaunted their wealth but looked down on each other as parvenu and vulgar, creating new social barriers to render themselves socially exclusive.<sup>679</sup> There was a nostalgia for the peerages of Europe and of England in particular.<sup>680</sup> Richard Henry Dana III (1851-1931) was the son of a celebrated New England family. His father, Richard Henry Dana II (1815-1882) was most famous for his account of life as a seaman in the 1830s, *Two Years before the Mast*, based upon the diaries he kept whilst working as a deckhand off the California coast between 1834-1836.<sup>681</sup> Perhaps inspired by his father's diary, *Hospitable England* is based upon Dana's much more comfortable stay in London in 1875-6. He seems to have had introductions to many in the

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<sup>676</sup> Charles Jennings, *Them and Us: The American Invasion of British High Society* (London: Sutton Publishing, 2007), p. 94.

<sup>677</sup> Henry James, *An International Episode*, (1874), (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1994), p. 59.

<sup>678</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 15.

<sup>679</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 9.

<sup>680</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1973; rep. 1986), p. 102.

<sup>681</sup> See Introduction to Richard Dana, *Hospitable England in the Seventies: The Diaries of a Young American 1875-76* 1921 (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2007).

highest ranks of English society and there is a account of an encounter with Burdett Coutts in 1876, 'she must be about forty years of age', - she was in fact sixty two - he noted that the date of her birth was 'carefully omitted from the Peerage':

She has brilliant eyes, bright color (sic), wore a broad brimmed Gainesboro' (sic) hat and was very well dressed. She was bright in conversation, though more serious than witty, and was pretty much the centre of attraction at the lunch. I talked with her a great deal on sociological and philanthropic subjects'.<sup>682</sup>

Although Dana's experiences were usually very positive, he did encounter some hostility:

Next to me at table sat an English lady who was pleasant smiling and talked agreeably until Sir John told her I was from America. Suddenly she turned her back on me ...she actually made a face and ejected some apparently unpleasant remark which I didn't quite catch...She is the only lady I have met who has shown such unfortunate impressions of 'Yankees' though there is still no little trace of the feeling that existed against the North during the Civil War and we must remember too that some of these people have lost heavily in Confederate bonds.<sup>683</sup>

It was explained to him later that the 'upper ten thousand' in England felt jealous and bitter towards America as they had lost it as a colony and through want of information, believed that all the gentry were in the Southern states and 'only shopkeepers' in the north.<sup>684</sup> Such views were apparently only held by the aristocracy who also believed tariffs to be the real cause of the civil war and not slavery.<sup>685</sup>

If the English aristocracy felt hostile towards Americans on account of the Civil War, the influx of wealthy young American ladies into society was another matter. The 1870s have

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<sup>682</sup> Diary entry 12 June 1876 in Dana, *Hospitable England*, p. 315. According to Osborne for many years Burdett Coutts enjoyed receiving two sets of presents owing to confusion as to on which date in April her birthday actually occurred. BL 46405A.

<sup>683</sup> Dana, *Hospitable England*, p. 125.

<sup>684</sup> Dana, *Hospitable England*, p. 126.

<sup>685</sup> Dana, *Hospitable England*, p. 126.

been called the defining era of Anglo-American marriage.<sup>686</sup> The landed gentry were no longer able to live as well as they did on the benefits of their land.<sup>687</sup> A landed estate was regarded as essential for a member of the aristocracy, but it was fast becoming a liability as rents decreased and harvests failed.<sup>688</sup> Only landowners with other sources of income such as mining prospered.<sup>689</sup> The 7th and 8th Dukes of Marlborough sold off family possessions in 1875, 1881 and again in 1886. The Duke of Newcastle sold off parcels of land as did the Dukes of Leeds, Beaufort and Abercorn.<sup>690</sup> The British aristocracy saw its salvation in the new money entering the country from America, it had always been receptive to newcomers when it suited it.<sup>691</sup> Young wealthy American women were often attracted by the exchange of their father's money for a title and famous marriages of the period included Jennie Jerome, the daughter of a New York stock broker, to Lord Randolph Churchill in April 1874, and Viscount Mandeville to Consuelo Yznaga del Valle in May 1876.<sup>692</sup> The American born novelist Henry James (1843-1916), explored the so-called 'international theme' in a number of novels from the 1870s until his death. In *Daisy Miller* (1878), Daisy's American innocence is brought into sharp contrast with the corruption of the old world.<sup>693</sup> Indeed Daisy Miller, a rather shallow, flirtatious young woman, who is condemned as 'common' was seen by many to represent the typical young American woman abroad, much to the consternation of many Americans.<sup>694</sup> James often contrasted the vitality and

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<sup>686</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 44

<sup>687</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>688</sup> Girouard in Jackson-Stops, *The Treasure Houses*, p. 23.

<sup>689</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 24.

<sup>690</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 26.

<sup>691</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, pp. 26, 27, 28.

<sup>692</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 44.

<sup>693</sup> Henry James, *Daisy Miller and Other Stories*, introduction by Pat Righelato (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2002), p. xii.

<sup>694</sup> Righelato in introduction to James, *Daisy Miller* p. ix.

innocence of Americans with the worldliness and experience of Europeans.<sup>695</sup> These themes were also explored by Edith Wharton (1862-1937) in such novels as *The Custom of the Country* (1913) up until her last and unfinished novel, *The Buccaneers* (1937) which explored the ill-fated marriage of Consuelo Vanderbilt and the Duke of Marlborough.<sup>696</sup> In such a climate the presence of a young American in Angela Burdett Coutts' circle would not necessarily have raised eyebrows but this was not a marriage between a wealthy young American heiress and an older English peer, but a comparatively poor American-born man and an extremely rich elderly woman. The matter of his birth may have played a part in the ensuing hostility to the match but these other factors were probably of more significance. There was no precedent for her subsequent actions and it throws an interesting light on the determination and unorthodox aspects of her character.

In 1877 Burdett Coutts was informed by the British Ambassador, Austen Henry Layard, of the serious plight of Turkish women and children escaping the advancing Cossacks in the latest Russo-Turkish War.<sup>697</sup> She launched the Turkish Compassionate Fund, donated £1,000 and despatched a yacht loaded with medical supplies and food.<sup>698</sup> Also on board, at Burdett Coutts's request, was Ashmead. Meanwhile, her former governess and companion, Hannah Brown had become increasingly frail and on 21 December 1878 she died.<sup>699</sup> Hannah Brown was buried alongside her husband in the vault at Stephen's Church, Burdett Coutts's own endowment in Westminster, where Burdett Coutts wished to be laid herself.<sup>700</sup> In an effort to recover from her loss she decided to take a Mediterranean cruise accompanied by a small group of friends and chartered a steam yacht, *The Walrus*.<sup>701</sup> She invited Admiral and Mrs. Gordon, the geologist James Tennant, Edwin Long and his wife;

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<sup>695</sup> Righelato in introduction to James, *Daisy Miller*, p. vii.

<sup>696</sup> Jennings, *Them and Us*, p. 44.

<sup>697</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 219.

<sup>698</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 221.

<sup>699</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 221.

<sup>700</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 221.

<sup>701</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 227.

Henry Irving and Ashmead. The voyage was to be the catalyst in their relationship and upon her return to England she decided to marry him.<sup>702</sup> She apparently thought that the marriage of a socially prominent, extremely rich sixty-six year old woman and a comparatively poor, twenty-nine year old man would only be a nine-day wonder.<sup>703</sup> This was an extraordinary decision to take and was the subject of a great deal of scandalised gossip.<sup>704</sup> Although I have been unable to find direct evidence of the newspaper coverage in Britain of the scandal, the *New York Times* gave considerable coverage to the affair in the months preceding the marriage and it even featured in the Australian press.<sup>705</sup> In August 1880 under the by-line *The Obstinate Old Lady Burdett Coutts*, *The New York Times* stated that: 'the "Burdett Coutts affair" is occupying the attention of all classes of society. It is discussed everywhere, at the clubs, at tea-tables, in bars, and by all sorts of people. The general opinion is that the aged virgin, if she marries young Ashmead-Bartlett, will forfeit respect, esteem, position'.<sup>706</sup> Despite its description of Burdett Coutts, *The New York Times* was generally sympathetic and quick to discern anti-American bias. It waxed indignantly on her behalf:

it may... be safely said that were Lady Burdett Coutts an American and were she to marry an Englishman, young or old, there is not an American newspaper read by decent people that would print the insulting paragraphs and letters that are now appearing in the leading newspapers. There is not an American who would dream of writing her a letter such as the Prince of WALES (sic) recently wrote her, and though a crowd might assemble to see her married, no one would dream of hissing her.<sup>707</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 226.

<sup>703</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Harrowby dated 18 July 1880, MS Harrowby LXVII fo. 109 quoted in Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 228.

<sup>704</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 231.

<sup>705</sup> *The Mercury*, Hobart, (8 August 1880) in National Library of Australia, [www.trove.nla.gov.au/nla.newarticle8986708](http://www.trove.nla.gov.au/nla.newarticle8986708), accessed 25 February 2010.

<sup>706</sup> *The New York Times* (30 August 1880).

<sup>707</sup> 'Lady Burdett Coutts' in *The New York Times* (31 August 1880). I have been unable to find any copy of the letter by the Prince of Wales.

Initially the will of the Duchess of St Albans proved a stumbling block and she wished any news of the marriage to be kept quiet whilst she tried to negotiate her way around the fact that if she married an 'alien' she would be disinherited.<sup>708</sup> She believed she could circumnavigate the alien clause in the will because Ashmead was a naturalised British subject.<sup>709</sup> Disraeli wrote to the Queen:

Next to Afghanistan, I think the greatest scrape is Lady Burdett's marriage, I thought Angela would have become classical and historical history, and would have been an inspiring feature in your Majesty's illustrious reign, the element of the ridiculous has now so deeply entered her career that even her best friends can hardly avoid a smile by a sigh !<sup>710</sup>

The Earl of Harrowby sent Burdett Coutts a letter received from Queen Victoria on the 'unsuitable marriage'.<sup>711</sup> Not only was Queen Victoria scandalised but Burdett Coutts's immediate family, with the exception of her sister Susan, were also against the match.<sup>712</sup> In 2006 the British Library was given letters between Burdett Coutts and her family which revealed the extent of the family anger.<sup>713</sup> Her sister, Clara Money, launched a successful legal action to claim three-fifths of Burdett Coutts's income and in a package marked 'very private-to be destroyed unopened' there is a letter from Clara questioning the status of Ashmead and the nature of the relationship:

How can a man of Mr. Bartlett's age find in you all that a young man looks

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<sup>708</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 229.

<sup>709</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 229.

<sup>710</sup> Letter dated 22 September 1880 in *Disraeli: Letters to Queen Victoria*, vol. III, p. 146, quoted in Healey, *Coutts*, p. 368.

<sup>711</sup> Letter from Queen Victoria to 2nd Earl of Harrowby dated 10 July 1880, Harrowby Archives. LXV11 fo.88, quoted in Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 288.

<sup>712</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 203.

<sup>713</sup> 'The Marriage that Shocked Victoria', *The Observer* (13 August 2006).

for in the wife he loves - it is contrary to nature to expect such a thing possible...Neither is Mr Bartlett at all in the position which any gentleman should hold who was to be your husband' <sup>714</sup>

She wrote of the loss of Burdett Coutts's good reputation and Burdett Coutts wrote a note on the back of the envelope 'Clara's letter to me - almost incredible she could write it after all that passed between us...when I first named my marriage - two years since. Thank God nothing prevented it'.<sup>715</sup> This is a very rare glimpse of Burdett Coutts's feelings on a personal matter and evidence that certainly at that time she had no regrets.

Even Ashmead decided to give up the idea of marriage but this did not deter Burdett Coutts, nor did the fact that the newspapers now had the story. When her solicitor, Farrer, explained that Ashmead had offered to release her she replied 'That may be, but I don't release him and intend to carry it out'.<sup>716</sup> Stories of the shipboard romance between Ashmead and a passenger on board the *Walrus* circulated. Ashmead was reported to have described Burdett Coutts as a 'lamppost of a woman', and have stated that her money would help his ambition.<sup>717</sup> Certainly by the time the couple were married the *New York Times* could state of Ashmead that owing to 'his wife's patronage, ...(he) has acquired considerable social prominence'.<sup>718</sup> Coutts & Co was also very concerned at the possible damage to its reputation – especially should the husband decide to interfere in its workings.<sup>719</sup> They also feared to sever the connection with Burdett Coutts because of the public scandal and having to deal with her sister Clara's son, Frank Money, to whom Clara

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<sup>714</sup> *The Observer* (13 August 2006).

<sup>715</sup> *The Observer* (13 August 2006).

<sup>716</sup> Memo to the Hon. Henry Ryder, July 1880 MS Harrowby LXVII fo. 109. quoted in Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 231.

<sup>717</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 231.

<sup>718</sup> 'The Baroness Married', *The New York Times* (13 February 1881).

<sup>719</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 366.

intended to pass her interest should it default to her.<sup>720</sup> The 'mad marriage' as Queen Victoria called it took place on Saturday 12 February 1881 not in her endowed church of St Stephen's but at her parish church of Christ Church, Down Street, Piccadilly in the centre of fashionable Mayfair.<sup>721</sup> According to the *New York Times*, Burdett Coutts was refused permission by the Queen to marry in the Chapel Royal of the Savoy, although the clergyman from the chapel did officiate at Christ Church.<sup>722</sup> It was nevertheless a high-profile location which suggests Burdett Coutts felt determined not to bow to any pressure to hide the event. In a restrained report of the wedding, the *Times* referred to the 'long-talked of marriage' and 'for obvious reasons the time fixed upon for this wedding was not disclosed till a few hours before'.<sup>723</sup> The ceremony was even then treated as strictly private, none but the nearest relatives and a few confidential friends being present.<sup>724</sup> The *Times* described her dress: 'a robe of ivory-white satin, her head being covered by a lace veil and the bridesmaids wore pretty cream white dresses.' Queen Victoria wrote in her journal:

That poor foolish old woman Lady Burdett-Coutts was presented on her marriage with Mr. Bartlett, forty years younger than herself. She looked like his grandmother, and was all decked out with jewels – not edifying'.<sup>725</sup>

However, this description is contradicted by a report in *The New York Times* which, quoting the British newspaper *The World*, described the bride's toilette:

...it was composed of cream satin and velvet brocade, trimmed with bows of ribbon and white marabout; bonnet to match, trimmed with stephanotis and white heather, lace lappets and ancient Spanish veil of very fine lace. Her ladyship's only ornaments were a locket of antique gold, the gift of her sister, and a cat's-eye bracelet set in diamonds, the gift of the bridegroom...of

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<sup>720</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 370.

<sup>721</sup> Healey, *Coutts*, p. 369.

<sup>722</sup> 'Lady Burdett Coutts' in *The New York Times* (31 August 1880).

<sup>723</sup> *The Times* (14 February 1881), p. 6.

<sup>724</sup> *The Times* (14 February 1881), p. 6.

<sup>725</sup> Queen Victoria's Journal 3 May 1881, Royal Archive quoted in Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 207.



unsurpassable beauty'.<sup>726</sup>

Queen Victoria seems only too prepared to believe the worst of Burdett Coutts on this occasion. Certainly *The Illustrated London News* carried an illustration of the wedding in its issue of 19 February (fig 62) and there is another illustration from an unsourced publication in Diana Orton's book (fig. 63). Both illustrations follow a conventional pattern, though the latter concentrates on the figures of the bride and groom whereas the first puts it into context, with attending clergymen, bridesmaids and some guests. The clergyman in the Orton picture bears no relation to that in the *I.L.N.* illustration and the other supporting figures such as bridesmaids are similarly vague. Both illustrations seem to support the report in *The World* rather than Queen Victoria's acid description. The bride is shown wearing a fashionable, elegant, rather deceptively simple gown, perhaps more in keeping with the conventional young bride than an older woman. The *I.L.N.* depicts the pair standing at the altar prior or during the ceremony, whilst the Orton picture depicts Burdett Coutts wearing a small jacket around her shoulders and the veil lifted and is clearly meant to illustrate the couple after the ceremony as they descend the steps to begin a new life together. There is no suggestion in either illustrations of the large age gap between the couple however, although there is no attempt to flatter the Baroness it is apparent that she is not young.

Quite why Burdett Coutts went through with it can only be speculated upon. As a single woman she was in a difficult position in society. She had grown up in a world where the married woman was in the vast majority - by the mid nineteenth-century single women made up only nine per cent of the population.<sup>727</sup> There was considerable social pressure to marry. By the late seventeenth century the term 'old maid' had first been used and 'spinster' had taken on a derogatory sense and become synonymous with 'deformed and disfigured women - ugliness and a lack of feminine charms'.<sup>728</sup> It was soon a term transferred to learned women and other women who were not primarily involved in

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<sup>726</sup> *The New York Times* (31 August 1880).

<sup>727</sup> Bridget Hill, *Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1660-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 9.

<sup>728</sup> Hill, *Women Alone*, p. 81.

domestic affairs as a way of belittling them.<sup>729</sup> Davidoff and Hall argue that at this time a woman's femininity was expressed through her dependence.<sup>730</sup> It was also expected of children and unmarried daughters in particular that they look after their parents.<sup>731</sup> Hannah Brown had been Burdett Coutts's focus, she may well have regarded her as a surrogate mother and may have felt her single status more acutely after Brown's death. It was reported that she accepted the title Baroness because she felt that being 'already advanced in years she would avoid the unpleasantness of being a 'Miss' when her age and position seemed to call for a title of more dignity.'<sup>732</sup> There is something disingenuous in this argument however, for according to the Mrs Twining, the wife of the curate of her church, St Stephen's after 1881 Burdett Coutts always insisted on being known as 'the Baroness' and her husband always referred to her thus.<sup>733</sup> This would suggest that she was well aware of her elevated status and the title meant much more to her than merely a reflection of her advanced years. Without Brown she might well have felt that she had no 'feminine' purpose in the sight of contemporary society and society's contempt for her single status.

Nevertheless, there was some sympathy there from those who had known her many years including her cousin, Lord Harrowby. He wrote to her, recognising her loneliness and offering to provide the support she had lost from the death of Brown.<sup>734</sup> She thanked him but replied that Ashmead offered her the only chance of comfort now that 'she could never be a first object to anyone except a husband...' without him she was left with 'a future from which I not only recoil but which I feel I cannot face'.<sup>735</sup> Attempts by friends to dissuade her came to nothing. In a letter to her secretary at the time, Mr Hassard, she

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<sup>729</sup> Hill, *Women Alone* p. 81.

<sup>730</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1650* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 114.

<sup>731</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England, 1300-1840* (1986), p. 4 quoted in Hill, *Women Alone*, p. 69.

<sup>732</sup> *The New York Times* (22 May 1904).

<sup>733</sup> Journal of Mrs. A.G. Twining, WCA.

<sup>734</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 230.

<sup>735</sup> Harrowby MSS July 1880 f. 107 quoted in Healey, *Coutts*, p. 367.

insisted that no marriage, 'however singular or if you like eccentric, was a matter of scandal'.<sup>736</sup> It is highly probable that the thought of facing the future in the loneliness of her great wealth was just too much to contemplate.

As been already noted, no conventional Victorian woman when it suited her, Burdett Coutts also retained her own renowned surname. Orton quotes from a popular song of the period which suggests that not everyone disapproved of the marriage: 'She married him after all,/ With her lands and money and all;/ He's young and gay, she's old they say/ But her heart's as sweet as flowers in May/ Jolly good luck to Miss Coutts we say-/ She's married him after all'.<sup>737</sup> Burdett Coutts was a popular figure among the poor, it is hardly surprising that they championed her cause but it is unlikely that this was a commonly shared view. The costers may have wished her well but the world saw it somewhat differently: 'For fortune hunting to eternal fame stands William Pole Tylney-Long-Wellesley-Tylney-Long's name./ But he was scarcely fit to lick thy boots/ William Lehmen Ashmead Burdett-Coutts-Bartlett-Coutts'.<sup>738</sup> This disdain is also reflected in a cartoon of Ashmead by 'Spy' from *Vanity Fair* (fig. 64) depicting a sharply suited rather louche 'man about town', cigarette in one hand and the other in his pocket.<sup>739</sup> Referring to Ashmead simply as *The Baroness's Husband* the accompanying text takes a cynical view of him: 'shrewd and practical, energetic and intelligent ... of good address, fond of shooting, hunting and other field sports, and he has a sufficient sense of the importance of the husband of the Baroness'.<sup>740</sup> The wife of the vicar of St Stephens's Church, Mrs A. G. Twining, left papers relating to her memories of Burdett Coutts.<sup>741</sup> They provide a contrast to the usually sympathetic accounts by Charles Osborne and others, written as they are in somewhat bitter tones.<sup>742</sup> Twining referred to

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<sup>736</sup> Unreferenced, Healey, *Coutts*, p. 368.

<sup>737</sup> Unreferenced, Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 238.

<sup>738</sup> Quoted in Mordaunt Crook, *The Rise of the Nouveaux Riches*, p. 266.

<sup>739</sup> *Vanity Fair* (12 March 1880).

<sup>740</sup> Quoted in Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 207.

<sup>741</sup> Twining Papers, WCA.

<sup>742</sup> WCA. Burdett Coutts's marriage resulted in a decrease in her income and less money for philanthropic

Burdett Coutts as being 'broken in old age', and stated that it was originally proposed that their marriage would only have been a 'form of marriage' and that wife and husband would have been mere courtesy titles.<sup>743</sup> According to Twining, originally the idea was that Ashmead would live in a 'well furnished house in Piccadilly' with his fiancée, but that his fiancée refused to go along with this proposal.<sup>744</sup> Unfortunately there is no other evidence for this. Certainly it is highly improbable that the marriage was anything other than a marriage in name only, and that it was essentially a mutually beneficial contract. Twining further contends that Burdett Coutts was badly treated by her young husband who had expensive hobbies.<sup>745</sup> Orton states that Charles Osborne told his son that he had often heard Ashmead make 'cutting remarks' to his wife and that he brought his mistresses to Stratton Street.<sup>746</sup> Certainly, after Ashmead went on a trip to America in 1890, apparently accompanied by his mistress, Mrs. Twining reports that the Baroness 'in a state of great agitation' deposited her 'valuable archives' with Mr. Twining as she did not wish her husband to have them.<sup>747</sup> She requested that Mr. Twining keep them until her death, and on no account was her husband or his family to know where they were.<sup>748</sup> Nevertheless many friends testified to the happiness of the marriage and the comments Burdett Coutts wrote on her sister's letter certainly suggest she did not regret the match.

## Philanthropist

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causes such as St Stephen's Church where Mrs Twining's husband was the incumbent.

<sup>743</sup> Twining Papers, WCA.

<sup>744</sup> Twining Papers, WCA.

<sup>745</sup> Twining Papers, WCA..

<sup>746</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 241. *The New York Times* (7 March 1891) reported that Ashmead had been named as a defendant in a divorce case.

<sup>747</sup> Twining Papers, WCA.

<sup>748</sup> These papers were subsequently distributed to various sources after the death of Ashmead; correspondence on church and charity matters to Lambeth Palace, some to Ashmead's heirs, the Rajah Brooke correspondence to the British Museum (Library). Some were sold to an American purchaser in 1922 and are now unaccounted for, Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 242.

This philanthropic compulsion enacted at first chiefly within the evangelical party but that part became, at long last, great enough to give the tone to society at large and the practice of superintending the poor has become so general, that I know no one circumstance by which the manner, studies and occupation of Englishwomen had been so extensively modified, or so strikingly contra-distinguished from those of a former generation.

Lucy Aikin, 1842 <sup>749</sup>

Angela Burdett Coutts regarded her great wealth as a 'trust placed on her', and the causes in which she invested time and money were varied and numerous; if Burdett Coutts is remembered at all today it is as a philanthropist. Philanthropy is defined in the dictionary as 'love of mankind'.<sup>750</sup> During the eighteenth century however, 'charity' and 'philanthropy' were used interchangeably with the general sense of having love for one's fellow human beings or with particular meaning for the practical efforts of aiding those in need.<sup>751</sup> Eventually 'charity' took on the significance of being local or individual efforts while 'philanthropy' was perceived as being more systematic or institutionalised until by the nineteenth century both words were used synonymously.<sup>752</sup>

So closely was Burdett Coutts identified with philanthropy that she has been described as a 'professional philanthropist'.<sup>753</sup> Although it is difficult to compare Victorian philanthropy with that of previous centuries, it is certainly true that the nineteenth century saw a huge increase in charitable works and donations. By the end of the century there were one thousand charitable institutions in London with an income well in excess of six million pounds.<sup>754</sup> In a letter to William Ellery Channing, Lucy Aikin, critic and historian, noted

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<sup>749</sup> Anne Letitia Le Breton, ed., *The Correspondence of William Ellery Channing and Lucy Aikin*, (1874), quoted in Dorice Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth Century England* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia, 2002), p. 54.

<sup>750</sup> *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911, rep. 1983).

<sup>751</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 12.

<sup>752</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 12.

<sup>753</sup> D. Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Oxford: Harvard and Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 401.

<sup>754</sup> F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 21.

that visiting the poor had become 'a fashion and a rage' amongst Englishwomen and that philanthropic work done by Englishwomen of that time was their distinguishing trait.<sup>755</sup> In fact its origins lay in earlier traditions of paternalism, indeed Burdett Coutts saw the philanthropy in which she was involved as a direct link with the past.

In the preface to *Woman's Mission*, a series of papers compiled for the World's Columbian exposition or World's Fair held in Chicago in 1893 Burdett Coutts wrote of women's place in philanthropy, which was included in the exposition under the auspices of the Department of Women's Work.<sup>756</sup> She saw philanthropy in the late nineteenth century as the 'historical benevolence' practised in the manor house of old. In her view the manor house had been the centre of old-style philanthropy and also the centre of country life. It was at the manor house that young servants were trained: 'taught respect for religion, all attended the same church, the same rites', shared 'simple piety' till at rest in the churchyard. The Manor House kitchen was the place of refuge in times of distress and 'women's technical arts' - needlework, cookery, dairy management, cheese making - formed the education of poorer girls - 'as important to the social welfare of the nation as anything that can be trained'.<sup>757</sup> The well-to-do farmhouse formed the base where it was easy to learn the 'art of making the home happy as in any institution'. The 'old fashioned' libraries of the greater country houses 'quietly fostered tastes and opinions in the minds of boys and girl readers and were thus silently moulding the opinions and history of the future'.<sup>758</sup> She conceded that perhaps the scholastic education was not so good but in the wider sense 'more was learnt in the old country homes of England than most remember, or that may seem willing to believe'.<sup>759</sup> However, times had changed, she acknowledged that there had been growth of a middle class, 'vast in number' and extremely well to do but with this had

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<sup>755</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 54.

<sup>756</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. ix.

<sup>757</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. xv.

<sup>758</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. 42.

<sup>759</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. xvii.

come a disassociation from nature, overcrowding, and other ills which meant that organised philanthropy was needed. She concluded that 'piety and charity now combined in the beautiful word philanthropy has run through the natural life in golden threads'.<sup>760</sup>

This preface is one of the few documents that set out the thoughts of Burdett Coutts. Her view of the past is a romantic and nostalgic one, she looked back to a time when 'there was no need for titles' where it was all 'society' or 'association'.<sup>761</sup> Of course, the fact that she held a title herself and paternally descended from a family which had held land and titles for generations is conveniently overlooked, for as has already been discussed, this nostalgia for rural life was widely held. The village community was seen as an ideal setting for relationships in wider society, reinforcing deference, social hierarchy and order.<sup>762</sup> As Leonore Davidoff has stated, there is often a psychological stability from 'knowing your place' in society and she attributes the 'golden age' syndrome to William Cobbett who saw the rural life as a vision of an ideal society.<sup>763</sup> Writing in the 1820s he warned: They are reducing the community to two classes: Master and slaves...when master and man were the terms, everyone was in his place and all men free'.<sup>764</sup>

There was a feeling that a sense of belonging, in both a local community and by extension the home was an important moral force - the 'Beau Ideal' or perfect beauty in which one's ideas are realised.<sup>765</sup> Servants working in the local big house were often looked after by the family. Aristocratic employers sometimes solicited for jobs for newly departing servants from their friends and relatives and there was the prospect of long term patronage when a

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<sup>760</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (London: Polity Press, 1995), p. 49.

<sup>761</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. xvii.

<sup>762</sup> Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, p. 42.

<sup>763</sup> Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, p. 46.

<sup>764</sup> William Cobbett writing in the *Political Register* (14 April 1821) quoted in Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, p. 49.

<sup>765</sup> Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, p. 45.

servant became too sick or old to continue.<sup>766</sup> This was often an attraction to those in service, although conversely it meant that it would be unwise to fall out with such an important local employer.<sup>767</sup> Essentially this philanthropy was a reciprocal arrangement or form of 'gift economy', which Derrida has claimed obligates the receiver and makes labour insufficient as repayment.<sup>768</sup> In this example, one of the participants will always be dominant over the other, the relationship is always unequal. There was also the danger that, as Lucy Aikin put it 'a positive demand for misery was treated by the incessant eagerness manifested to relieve it'.<sup>769</sup> Such a scenario is depicted in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* when Dorothea Brooke who hopes to erect model houses on her fiancé's estate is quite disappointed to discover that his tenants are well-provided for and have no need of her assistance : '...she felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick...She would have preferred of finding that her home would be in a parish which had a larger share of the world's misery so that she might have had more active duties in it'.<sup>770</sup>

Burdett Coutts was correct in her perception that philanthropy as practised by the upper classes was a long held duty, if an avoidable one. It had operated on a local, small scale and was essentially a rural occupation.<sup>771</sup> Caroline Wiggett, who lived at The Vyne, a large sixteenth century house in Hampshire in the early 1820s, described her aunt, Elizabeth Chute's, charitable activities in a nostalgic tone whereby even the poverty was more 'real' in the past:

Aunt C, also every year gave away broth for the three winter months, which was

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<sup>766</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, pp. 36,37.

<sup>767</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>768</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Given Time:1. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992).

<sup>769</sup> Williams Elliot, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 64.

<sup>770</sup> George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 1872 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, rep. 1999), p. 55.

<sup>771</sup> Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004), p. 84.



made in a large copper in the larder, at which she always presided at 8 o' clock in the morning, and I was very fond of going to see the people having their jugs filled, so much a head, in short an immense deal was given away, but in those days there was real poverty, such as is not known in these days, I am happy to say.<sup>772</sup>

As a result of her inheritance Angela Burdett Coutts was besieged by begging letters throughout her life. In 1838 one writer had estimated that impostors wrote one thousand begging letters each day in London alone.<sup>773</sup> Osborne records that she read as carefully as she could every application to her, replacing the letter in its envelope and writing notes or requesting her secretaries to do so. Private letters were answered personally but owing to a fear of forgery she avoided writing to anyone of whom she had no knowledge.<sup>774</sup> She made an effort to reply to every letter even those from obvious impostors, and made a point of returning documents and any other things sent to her; some of them from all over the world. It is clear that she was not easily won over despite her reputation for generosity as a letter in the National Art Library to an acquaintance met at a party indicates:

Miss Coutts begs to inform Mrs. Gordon that she is not in the habit of lending money in the way Mrs. Gordon seems to suppose. It would be impossible for Miss Coutts or any individual to comply with the wishes which might be received by parties met casually in society.

However Burdett Coutts could be most generous to written pleas to her generosity, as another letter in the National Art Library archive reveals: 'Miss Burdett Coutts presents her compliments to Mrs. Smith and begs to enclose her five pounds for the fund for the Rev. Mr Duke's children. Miss Coutts returns the enclosed letters and paper'.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Hampstead Records Office 31M 57/1076, pp. 32-3 quoted in Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain* (London: Penguin in Association with the National Trust, 1990, repr. 1993), p. 105.

<sup>773</sup> James Grant, *Sketches in London* (London: 1838), p.4, quoted in Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 41.

<sup>774</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46046B.

<sup>775</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts dated 17 December 1849, National Art Library, MSL/1903/9000/254.

Charles Osborne said of Thomas Coutts, that he disliked to be asked for a subscription or donation or to have pointed out to him a suitable case for assistance, and that this was 'a peculiarity inherited by his granddaughter',<sup>776</sup> but she was undoubtedly a generous benefactor and some had few qualms about approaching her more than once, as a letter written to John Smith, MP in the West Sussex County archives reflects:

Do you think you would find yourself at liberty to intercede on my behalf with that eminently benevolent lady to whom already my countrymen and myself are under great obligation, to that true philanthropist who surrounded by every comfort that wealth can command employs it, chiefly, to lightening the burden of the oppressed man... I am fully aware that I have no claim upon her save that...for my services...when spoken to, recognized them by a gift of £200 which eight years ago she sent me through you. I do not want such a sum, less than half of it would be most useful to me...<sup>777</sup>

Burdett Coutts continued to practice this private personal philanthropy, but the growth of towns and cities during the nineteenth century and the consequent problems of overcrowding and poverty meant that this small-scale philanthropy was soon perceived, rightly, to be inadequate.<sup>778</sup> Burdett Coutts's perception of an 'enormous middle class' is perhaps grudging, but she does gradually concede that times have changed and philanthropy must change with it: 'philanthropy then was practised by the ladies of the large house who lived under the influence of traditional duties, which they accepted as part of their inheritance but are now undertaken by their descendants on a much larger scale'.<sup>779</sup> In fact, the vast amount of urban philanthropy practiced in the nineteenth century was essentially a middle-class phenomenon.<sup>780</sup>

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<sup>776</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>777</sup> Letter from C. Szutezenski to John Abel Smith, M.P (1802-1871), dated 6 November 1868. W.S.R.O. Smith Papers Add. MSS 22425-22426.

<sup>778</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 112.

<sup>779</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. xv.

<sup>780</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 4.

On 9 January 1885, *The Times* reported that charitable receipts in London alone came to more than the national budgets of Denmark, Portugal, Sweden or the Swiss Confederation at a time when men were placed firmly in the public world of business, commerce and politics and women were largely confined to the private world of the home and family.<sup>781</sup> Philanthropy, along with Church work, provided an acceptable outlet for other energies. From the 1850s onwards, women and especially unmarried women, were encouraged in this unpaid work, assisting in schools, asylums, prisons, workhouses and hospitals, and clergy actively courted women of all classes for charitable works.<sup>782</sup> These activities were seen as extensions of the home; 'borderlands' where non-conforming women were allowed a degree of flexibility and the middle-class lady could be engaged in semi-public activities.<sup>783</sup> However, any work in which they were involved was expected to take second place to the prime interest of work in the home; even female Chartists took pains to stress their devotion to their homes and families.<sup>784</sup> The appalling conditions in the major cities also led to a recognition that society was putting itself at risk if it continued to ignore the plight of the poor. Philanthropy became a means not only of alleviating the terrible conditions under which so many people lived but a means of social rehabilitation rather than an act of paternalistic-based act of charity in the old model.<sup>785</sup> Allied to this was a sense of moral outrage at the ignorance and anti-social attitudes displayed by the very poor which seemed to threaten the stability of society.<sup>786</sup> There grew up a distinct difference between *poverty*, an economic situation, and *pauperism*, a moral condition and these distinctions were at the

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<sup>781</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 21.

<sup>782</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp. 37-46.

<sup>783</sup> Anne Digby, 'Victorian Values and Women in Public and Private' in T. C. Smout, *Victorian Values* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 196.

<sup>784</sup> Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1984), pp.149-50 cited in Smout, *Victorian Values*, p. 199.

<sup>785</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 44.

<sup>786</sup> Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Ines, eds., *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform: From the 1690s to 1850* (New York: St Martins Press, 1998), quoted in Frank Christianson, *Philanthropy in British and American Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 66.

forefront of Victorian consciousness.<sup>787</sup>

Although there was male opposition to the growing role of women in charitable associations many organisations were faced with the dilemma of trying to appease their male supporters whilst recognising the undoubted importance of the work of women in their societies.<sup>788</sup> Often a compromise was reached whereby the role of women was limited with no access to the decision-making committees. Single women without 'natural duties' to fulfil were advised to take up positive duties with those of a charitable nature taking precedence. Indeed, for those without a family, the charity itself could take a family's place. Florence Nightingale called upon women to deal with both public and charitable institutions as extensions of the home. As she said to her nurses 'While you have a ward, it must be your home and its inmates must be your children'.<sup>789</sup>

As previously discussed, the chief influence in Angela Burdett Coutts's life was her governess, Hannah Brown. Charles Osborne, described Hannah Brown as a woman of 'high ideals, strong character, unusual determination and stability of purpose'.<sup>790</sup> Once she had set her heart on something it was unusual for it to be thwarted: 'Her methods, perhaps were sometimes a little too masterful, but that was more than atoned for by her largeness of heart, ready sympathy... and a noble conception of truth and duty'.<sup>791</sup> Hannah Brown shared with her employers, Sir Francis and Lady Burdett, sympathies with the evangelical movement of the Church of England.<sup>792</sup> It is worth quoting from a letter written by Burdett Coutts in 1856 which Osborne considered of great importance in understanding her mind and character. It refers to her 'dear friend' to whom:

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<sup>787</sup> Christianson, *Philanthropy*, p. 130.

<sup>788</sup> Miss E. J. Whately, *Cousin Mabel's Experience: Sketches of Religious Life in England* (London: [np] 1870), p. 105 quoted Prochaska, *Philanthropy*, p. 41.

<sup>789</sup> Nightingale Papers BL11 Ms item 37 quoted in Prochaska, *Philanthropy*, p. 147.

<sup>790</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>791</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>792</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

I am indebted, not only for whatever information I may possess but for my first interest in these subjects and for the first direction of my mind to the observation of the multitude of objects of usefulness and beauty with which a merciful Father has surrounded us. From her I first learnt that happiness and comfort are the exclusive possession of no condition in life, but are obtainable by most people, proceeding out of common things and simple pleasures, and seldom...if wholly missed by those who walk carefully and reverently in the footsteps of our Great example, and who cherish a humble sympathy with all the work He has entrusted to the heart and hands of His Children.<sup>793</sup>

Brown was to be Angela Burdett Coutts's constant companion until her death in 1878, even deferring her marriage to Dr. William Brown for several years at Burdett Coutts's request.<sup>794</sup> Even after the marriage Burdett Coutts was reluctant to sever her close ties with Hannah, Dr. Brown gave up his medical practice and effectively joined the Burdett Coutts household.<sup>795</sup> This could suggest an autocratic, self-centred and controlling nature, which would manifest itself in her philanthropic schemes such as St. Stephen's Church which I will discuss in Chapter Four.

Nineteenth-century philanthropy was particularly associated with the evangelical movement of the Anglican church.<sup>796</sup> Although Methodists formed the largest group outside the Establishment, within the established Church evangelicals formed a small but growing group of clergy who reached the peak of their influence in the 1860s.<sup>797</sup> There was a major emphasis on man's fall from grace, a fundamentalist belief in the absolute supremacy of the Bible and a belief in original sin and corruption and as such they had much in common with seventeenth century Puritans.<sup>798</sup> The evangelicals aimed to bring Christianity to the people

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<sup>793</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>794</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 73.

<sup>795</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, pp. 172-3.

<sup>796</sup> Steinbach, *Women in England*, p. 134.

<sup>797</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, 1829-1859*, 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1987), I, p. 5.

<sup>798</sup> Ruskin's *Evangelical Beliefs* on [www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin) accessed 12 November 2009.

using the ballot box, the church service, traditional Sunday Schools and auxiliary societies but also through philanthropic visits.<sup>799</sup> As self-proclaimed bearers of the 'real truth' evangelicals were often accused of acting with arrogance and a heavy hand. In *Bleak House* Charles Dickens describes the philanthropist, Mrs Pardiggle as 'pouncing upon the poor and applying benevolence like a strait waistcoat'.<sup>800</sup>

Charles Osborne said that Burdett Coutts was evangelical for the first forty years of her life but disliked being 'labelled' and the narrowness of parties within the Church and became less associated with the movement in later years.<sup>801</sup> According to Edna Healey, Burdett Coutts felt that she was directed by the hand of God to 'feed my sheep' and the parable of the Good Shepherd is a recurring one in her letters.<sup>802</sup> Her great wealth, she believed, was bestowed on her so that she might use it in God's service. This would have been in line with

evangelical teaching which saw no problem with riches so long as they were used wisely. Comparatively few aristocratic women were involved in urban philanthropy however, Angela Burdett Coutts was one of the exceptions.

Although we have no evidence that Burdett Coutts visited anybody in their own home she did however make frequent visits to her own projects, notably Urania Cottage, and St. Stephen's Church, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four. She certainly visited one of the inhabitants of Urania Cottage, Mary Ann Atannell, in prison and many of the women from the Home wrote to her and received a reply.<sup>803</sup> For the social housing pioneer Octavia Hill personal knowledge of the tenants in her properties was an important aspect of her housing work, and she felt that women visitors could bestow a moralising influence on the lower

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<sup>799</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 43.

<sup>800</sup> Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Vintage Books, 1988, 1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1852-3), p. 423.

<sup>801</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>802</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 77.

<sup>803</sup> Jenny Hartley, *Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women* (London: Methuen, 2008), p. 134.

classes by living in proximity to them.<sup>804</sup> This was not the kind of close contact or charity that Burdett Coutts wanted or was involved in, indeed many felt uneasy about female visitors to the labouring classes.<sup>805</sup> It was feared that however well intentioned, such visits might antagonise the poor who would 'come to regard themselves as the inspected... and may pretend to be worse off than they are in order to receive charitable donations', the ever present Victorian fear of providing care to the undeserving.<sup>806</sup> Visiting the slums would have been a hazardous experience for many middle-class and upper-class women and not undertaken lightly. Dickens himself recounted a visit to the Westminster Ragged School in 1850: 'It is an awful place, in a maze of filth and squalor, so (dense) and deserted by all decency, that my appearance in those streets in whose heart it lies, brought out the people to a crowd'.<sup>807</sup>

As a result of her work for the Ragged School Union, Burdett Coutts became involved in the work of the Destitute Children's Dinner Society which was formed in 1864.<sup>808</sup> Burdett Coutts had realised the futility of teaching hungry children and she joined in a scheme pioneered in this country by Baroness Meyer de Rothschild and her sister to adopt a scheme for providing approximately fifty of the needy children attending Ragged Schools in North Tothill Street, Westminster, with one 'good meal' a fortnight.<sup>809</sup> Strict inquiries were made into the needs of each case so as to 'guard against the evils of pauperising parents'.<sup>810</sup> It was argued that the project was a practical means of teaching useful tools and bringing children under moral influence: 'cookery, laying of table, washing up etc could be done by

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<sup>804</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 183.

<sup>805</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 141.

<sup>806</sup> Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House*, p. 141.

<sup>807</sup> Letter from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 1 August 1850, quoted in Johnson, *Letters* p. 171.

<sup>808</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>809</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 36405A.

<sup>810</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

older schoolgirls at home under supervision - clean hands and faces, orderly manners, the saying of grace before meals all fostered a spirit of orderliness and discipline'.<sup>811</sup> The fact that the dinners were part of a series and not 'one off' examples were a source of pride to her and a credit to the Empire.<sup>812</sup> Burdett Coutts clearly felt that with this scheme she was taking part in a patriotic act. In December 1901 she noted that 'many of the men fighting for their country in South Africa were lads who in their childhood found their share of food and comfort in our dining room, where the foundation of their manhood was laid'.<sup>813</sup> By the end of 1865, over three thousand dinners had been given and regular appeals for money for this venture were made by Angela Burdett Coutts in *The Times* up to two years prior to her death.<sup>814</sup>

According to Charles Osborne's biographical notes, Angela Burdett Coutts had little regard for women; with the noted exception of Hannah Brown, her chief advisors and friends were men.<sup>815</sup> An insight into her attitude towards women is provided in Charles Osborne's notes where he records that 'although her generosity was limitless, she could be and was in matters of business often remarkably mean, to those who did not dare to stand out for [proper?] treatment'.<sup>816</sup> In the case of a Miss Pinn, a general assistant to Burdett Coutts 'she would only have treated a woman so meanly as she did this quaint little woman helper'.<sup>817</sup> He also noted that because she had difficulty in sometimes persuading men to carry out plans of action 'which were quite legitimate to a woman's mind' ...[she ] liked them and trusted them so much more than she did members of her own sex'.<sup>818</sup> The word 'feminist'

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<sup>811</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>812</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46495A

<sup>813</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>814</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>815</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46402.

<sup>816</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46403.

<sup>817</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 464063.

<sup>818</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.



was not coined until the end of the nineteenth century but Karen Offen and others have defined one of the core beliefs of feminism as including a belief that women's condition was socially constructed and not ordained by God or nature.<sup>819</sup> Given Burdett Coutts's rather conservative religious views it is unlikely that she would have agreed with this. She had no sympathy with women claiming a greater share in public life, nor enjoying higher education, although she was one of the first to urge the formation of an ordinary board of women interested in education to consult with the Education Department and London Board of Education on matters concerning girls' schools.<sup>820</sup> There were three petitions by John Stuart Mill to Parliament on the subject of women's rights, in 1866, 1867 and 1868 and Burdett Coutts is mentioned in a lecture on women's suffrage in 1869 as being one of a number of high-profile women including Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau claiming suffrage.<sup>821</sup> Given that both Nightingale and Martineau were indeed signatories to at least one of these petitions, it is possible that she may indeed have signed a petition but unfortunately I have been unable to substantiate this.<sup>822</sup> It is possible that, like Florence Nightingale, she was in fact somewhat ambivalent about the matter; Nightingale herself was more concerned with women's 'duties' rather than their 'rights'.<sup>823</sup> Certainly according to her secretary, Osborne, Burdett Coutts was uninterested in matters such as the establishment of colleges for women at Oxford and Cambridge, nor in the opening of new universities or in demands for degrees to be available to women on the same terms as men.<sup>824</sup> However, Burdett Coutts was strongly in favour of female School Inspectors in

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<sup>819</sup> Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs*, 14 (1988), pp. 119-57, cited in Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992), p.4. Nancy Gott *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), proposes three core beliefs, the others being opposition to sex hierarchy and a perception by women that they constitute both a biological sex and asocial group, cited in Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, p. 6.

<sup>820</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>821</sup> *A Lecture on Women's Suffrage* delivered in the Bristol Athenaeum on 24 February 1869 by F.W. Newman in Bristol Selected Pamphlets in [www.jstor.org.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk](http://www.jstor.org.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk) accessed 5 April 2010.

<sup>822</sup> Letter to Millicent Garrett Fawcett from Burdett Coutts dated 19 November 1885 on the subject of women's suffrage, unfortunately incomplete and therefore inconclusive. 9/01/0019ALC/19, The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University.

<sup>823</sup> Mark Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale: The Woman and Her Legend* (London: Viking, 2008), p. 375.

<sup>824</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

Westminster. She believed that women had a special aptitude for teaching, and was very gratified when a Miss Munday was chosen as a first inspector under the Education Department.<sup>825</sup> Similarly she wanted more women to be involved in the administration of the Poor Law and recognized females working as inspectors under the auspices of the Factory Acts and officers under the Local Sanitary Authority.<sup>826</sup> She was also broadly in favour of women gaining greater control of property and their earnings.<sup>827</sup> The artist Mary Ann Howitt recorded in her diary a visit to Angela Burdett Coutts and Mrs. Brown when the subject of women's property rights was discussed:

We sat and talked over Mr. Brown's death...We then talked of this proposed movement to secure to married women their own property and earnings. They both agree that it is quite right. Miss Coutts, who understands the subject thoroughly, said she believed some changes would be made in the laws regarding women and the management of their properties, but as to supporting the petition she must fully consider it and can say nothing at present.<sup>828</sup>

In 1870 she was invited to become a member of the School Board for London but declined – she did not think it advisable for women to hold such an office., though she was glad to see a female Sub-Committee appointed by the Board of Privy Council.<sup>829</sup> In her preface to *Woman's Mission: the Philanthropic Work of Women*, she did give full credit to the valuable work that women had done in education, hospitals and almshouses and credited the

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<sup>825</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>826</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>827</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>828</sup> Diary entry for 8 January 1856 quoted in Margaret Howitt, ed., *Mary Ann Howitt: An Autobiography*, 2 vols. (London: Isbister, 1889), I, p. 89.

<sup>829</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

American people (the Congress was held in Chicago) with being the first to give national recognition to 'the work and material effects of women's work and influence for good in the world'. However, she also held the traditional view of the family as the essential core of women's work:

The work that women now do in association was done of old from many little centres of family life...women have always had a full, perhaps an unrecognised, share in maintaining and combining works of mercy. To women the country owes many of its educational foundations.<sup>830</sup>

Ironically, Burdett Coutts's innate conservatism on the issue of women and their role in society was something at odds with the aims of this exposition: 'The 'World's Columbian exposition has afforded woman an unprecedented opportunity to represent to the world a justification of her claim to be placed on complete equality with man' said the preface to the official edition of *Art and Handicraft in the Woman's Building*, edited by Maud Howe Elliot.<sup>831</sup> The philanthropic section however seems to have been less radical in nature, with the introduction by the Duchess of Teck to Burdett Coutts's collection of essays on *Woman's Mission* seeking to stress the traditional approach to philanthropy as an extension of domestic work.<sup>832</sup> Nevertheless, despite her essentially conservative views Burdett Coutts was evidently seen as something of a role model for women, as a letter in the British Library from a young social worker, Violet Brook Hunt, testifies:

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to those who like yourself and Miss Nightingale first showed the world what fields of work were open for women who longed to do something useful with their lives. I hope you will find that we younger women may not prove unworthy of the heritage handed onto to us.<sup>833</sup>

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<sup>830</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. xx.

<sup>831</sup> Quoted in Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, p. 249.

<sup>832</sup> Quoted in Osborne, *Letters*, p. 8

<sup>833</sup> Undated letter from Violet Brook Hunt (1870-1910), writer, social worker and political activist. Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

Burdett Coutts inherited her dislike of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act from her father who had been an ardent opponent, and was further encouraged in her prejudice by Charles Dickens who was similarly hostile.<sup>834</sup> The Act was designed to encourage people to make more provision for themselves rather than fall upon the resources of the local parish. It marked a shift from the previous system of outdoor relief whereby people were allowed to remain in their own homes whilst obtaining funds from the local parish councils when hard times struck.<sup>835</sup> An economic success but a social failure, it led to the creation of the much-feared workhouse. It was criticised for focussing on the able-bodied adult male while ignoring the plight of women, children and the elderly.<sup>836</sup> Advanced age did not weaken her antagonism to the Act. In his biographical notes in the British Library, Charles Osborne relates that how, during a stay in Brighton between 1904-5, he read extracts of articles he had been writing 'urging the injustice of making the industrious support worthless able-bodied men in our workhouses'.<sup>837</sup> Burdett Coutts attacked him 'vehemently', and contended that the deserving poor dreaded the poorly administered law which might place them in such a place: 'the fear that relief was given to the able-bodied and idle was only further evidence of the neglect and incompetence with which the whole system was administered'.<sup>838</sup>

The 1834 Act proved a catalyst in attitudes towards charity for the poor. Its severe measures provoked many into action on behalf of the working class. Articles and books examining their lives began to appear from the 1840s onwards and Disraeli coined the term 'two nations' to describe the divide between rich and poor in his novel *Sybil or the Two Nations* in 1845. Magazine articles from this time exemplify the debates raging at the time as

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<sup>834</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>835</sup> Christianson, *Philanthropy*, p. 79.

<sup>836</sup> Christianson, *Philanthropy*, p. 79.

<sup>837</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>838</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

to the nature of philanthropy and the 'deserving and undeserving'.<sup>839</sup> In January 1848 an article in *Fraser's Magazine*, compared two families, one living 'in great comfort' on thirty eight shillings a week 'the young woman maintains undoubted respectability of character, dresses in a becoming manner and although upwards of twenty years old, attends regularly their Sunday School and church'. In contrast, another family 'avowed socialists or plain outspoken rioters, father, mother and six children, 'human beings without a humanised feeling, grovelling in the filth and sensuality of the swine, and exhibiting the ferocity of the savage'.<sup>840</sup> The emotive language and the equating of these people with animals leaves the reader in no doubt that they are a potential threat to decent respectable society, in this case 'socialist' is synonymous with 'open faced rioters'; many costermongers were supporters of the Chartist movement.<sup>841</sup> Clearly this is what society could expect if these problems were ignored.

In a speech to St Martin's Hall in September 1859, a Mr Potter denied that 'life to a working man is a ceaseless process of degradation a daily martyrdom, a funeral procession to the grave'.<sup>842</sup> He brings in the testimony of a working man to support this: 'the suffering of the class is a consequence either of improvidence on the part of the competently skilled or a course of trifling during the term of apprenticeship...improvidence is unhappily the deficit of the class'.<sup>843</sup> Such testimonies ignored the situations of women and the sick who were restricted in their occupations or unable to work. In fact, Eric Hobsbawm has stated that the single factor dominating the lives of nineteenth-century workers was insecurity.<sup>844</sup> At some time, perhaps at the age of forty or fifty, a worker would be unable to continue

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<sup>839</sup> 'The Manufacturing Poor' in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, January 1848 in J. M. Goldstrom, *The Working Classes in the Victorian Age: Debates on the Issue from Nineteenth Century Critical Journals*, Vol. III, *Urban Conditions 1848-1868: Social Conscience* (London: Gregg International Publishers Ltd. 1993), p. 3.

<sup>840</sup> Goldstrom, *The Working Classes*, III, p. 3.

<sup>841</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicholson, 1962), p. 236.

<sup>842</sup> Miscellaneous Statistics of the United Kingdom: Workman's Earnings and Savings', *Quarterly Review*, 108, No. 215, 1860 in Goldstrom, *The Victorian Working Classes*, III, pp. 81, 83.

<sup>843</sup> Goldstrom, *The Victorian Working Classes*, III, pp. 81, 83.

<sup>844</sup> Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, p. 219.

physical labour, the future then was uncertain. Even for the middle classes, the death of the male breadwinner could spell disaster, for the employment prospects for women were few.<sup>845</sup> The feeling that the working classes were somehow a different species is much to the fore in one of the most influential systematic studies of the poor, Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*. A work of investigative journalism in four volumes the poor here appear to speak for the first time in their own words. In his introduction Mayhew views the labouring poor as almost as a separate ethnic group, nomads, who he considers exist in every society alongside the more 'stable and intelligent'.<sup>846</sup> These 'nomads' are painstakingly categorised and discussed in the following chapters with the ordering, categorising and use of statistics which Leonore Davidoff refers to as the Victorian 'need to see the world in terms of figures'.<sup>847</sup> Such a 'scientific' device also reinforces the reader's impression that this is as accurate account of street life. Mayhew describes the 'wandering tribe of pickpockets, street performers - cabmen, beggars, prostitutes, watermen, 'doing nothing for their living but moving from place to place preying upon the more industrious', and incorporates the popular science of phrenology - 'they are all more or less distinguished for their high cheekbones and protruding jaws - for their use of a slang language - and for lax ideas of property' - this last striking at the heart of Victorian society.<sup>848</sup> Notwithstanding all this, Mayhew's intention was:

to give the rich a more intimate knowledge of the sufferings and the frequent heroism under the sufferings of the poor... to look with charity on the frailties of their less fortunate brethren - and cause those who are in high places and those of whom much is expected, to bestir themselves to improve the condition of a class of people whose misery, ignorance and vice, amidst all the immense wealth and great knowledge of the first city of the world, is to say the least, a national disgrace to us.<sup>849</sup>

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<sup>845</sup> Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, p. 219.

<sup>846</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 3 vols, 1851, 4 vols 1861-2 (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1967), IV, p. 4.

<sup>847</sup> Davidoff, *World's Between*, p. 83.

<sup>848</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour*, IV, p. 4

<sup>849</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour*, IV, p. 4.

Mayhew's investigation encapsulated the dilemma of many such writers and social reformers of the period, the people he is writing about arouse mixed feelings of pity, anger and revulsion. Frederick Engels and Karl Marx confirmed their views on the commodification of society in a series of papers and articles in the 1840s.<sup>850</sup> Engels, who spent twenty one months living among the working class of Manchester in 1841-2, sneered at: 'sentimental Tories, for the most part utopian visionaries, wallowing in reminiscences of the extinct patriarchal cottage industry exploitation and its concomitant piety'.<sup>851</sup> Other writers, such as Ruskin and Morris, also condemned the commodification of workers, and a system which trampled down Art and exalted commerce to 'a sacred religion'.<sup>852</sup>

Although Charles Osborne stated that she was only a limited reader of books on social problems, it is impossible to know the impact of such books and articles on Burdett Coutts.<sup>853</sup> In many ways she personified Engels' 'sentimental Tory' as she was certainly no radical. When Austin Henry Layard spoke out in the House of Commons in favour of reform in government agencies he appealed to the people and was resented for attacking his own Party.<sup>854</sup> Burdett Coutts believed he set 'class against class'.<sup>855</sup> However, according to her secretary, Burdett Coutts was an 'omnivorous reader of newspapers' and could not have failed to be aware of the many articles on the condition of the labouring poor. Such articles, combined with her friendship with Dickens and acquaintances with leading political

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<sup>850</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Articles on Britain* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), passim.

<sup>851</sup> Frederick Engels, 'The English Ten Hours Bill', March 1850 in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung Politische-ökonomische Revue*, No 4. in Mark and Engels, *Articles on Britain*, p. 98.

<sup>852</sup> William Morris, 'On Art and Socialism' delivered before the Secular Society of Leicester, 23 January 1884 in William Morris, *On Art and Socialism* (London: John Lehmann, 1942), pp. 96-107.

<sup>853</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>854</sup> Johnson, *Letters*, p. 299.

<sup>855</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

thinkers of the day must have had a major impact on her philanthropical activities.<sup>856</sup> As to her politics, a report from *The Manchester Guardian* on a political meeting in Flixton, Salford, in 1880 mentions that the local conservative candidate referred to a letter:

written by Lady Burdett Coutts, who said it was necessary in this country to have a 'strong Government' and she felt that the only party which at the present time could have a 'strong Government' was the Conservative Party. He...was happy to say that just before he left London that Lady Burdett Coutts said to him she hoped he would succeed at Salford.<sup>857</sup>

This certainly reinforces the view that she was innately conservative. In philanthropic work

she was not alone in this. Octavia Hill was strongly against any interference by the state to the extent that she was firmly against the introduction of the old age pension and school meals.<sup>858</sup>

Victorian respectability was highly concerned with order, and a woman who was accused of transgressing the code of respectability was seen as 'fallen' or dropped out of recognised social life.<sup>859</sup> It did not only incorporate sexual mores but any kind of moral lapse. The phenomenal interest in the 'fallen woman' problem became particularly strong in the mid and late nineteenth century when prostitution was thought to be particularly dangerous, threatening the heart of society, the family.<sup>860</sup> Estimates for prostitution in London ranged between ten and eighty thousand in the 1850s.<sup>861</sup> As a result there was a dramatic growth in rescue societies and Magdalene Homes, the number of which jumped from sixty in 1856 to

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<sup>856</sup> Burdett Coutts, BL 46406B.

<sup>857</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (30 September 1880).

<sup>858</sup> Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900: Beauty for the People* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 65.

<sup>859</sup> Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p. 82

<sup>860</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 184.

<sup>861</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 184.



three hundred and eight by the end of the century.<sup>862</sup>

In 1854 Burdett Coutts tried to purchase *Margaret Returning from the Fountain* (lost), the 'gem' of the Portland Gallery according to *The Athenaeum*. The critics declared it: 'the first picture so far of the year, and one of the best pictures ever painted by a woman...full of more heart than women usually show to the sorrows of their own sex – painted with the firm delicacy of a man's execution'.<sup>863</sup> *Margaret returning From the Fountain* depicts a scene from Goethe's *Faust* when the heroine Margaret realises that she is pregnant and that Faust, who has seduced her, will also betray her. Critics admired the figure of Margaret, interpreting her pose as a sign of her 'deep grief and penitence' at the loss of her purity.<sup>864</sup> Burdett Coutts was sufficiently impressed with the painting to wish to purchase it but was too late.<sup>865</sup> Unfortunately with no description of *Margaret* and with its whereabouts unknown it is not possible to gain an insight into what qualities attracted Burdett Coutts to it. Given her usual

criteria it is likely to be the treatment of the subject rather than the particular style in which it was painted.

The mid-nineteenth century concern with the growth of prostitution and the plight of morally 'lost' women was reflected in a proliferation of paintings on this theme, notably in Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, 1854 (fig.65), Rossetti's *Found*, 1854 (fig. 66) and Augustus Egg's trilogy *Past & Present*, 1858 (fig.67). All these works depict the consequences of the fall from respectability. In Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* the kept woman jumps up from the lap of her lover in sudden realisation of the wretchedness of her situation. The bourgeois domestic setting and accoutrements of respectable Victorian life cannot hide her moral downfall while the prostitute in Rossetti's *Found* tries to flee from her former sweetheart, falling to the ground in her shame just as she has fallen from respectability. In

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<sup>862</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 188.

<sup>863</sup> *The Athenaeum* (18 March 1854), p. 346.

<sup>864</sup> 'Fine Art Gossip', *The Athenaeum*, (25 March 1854), p. 380.

<sup>865</sup> The *Dante and Beatrice* mentioned by Hirsch, *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon*, p. 93.

*Past & Present* we see the tragic consequences of sexual transgression unfold before us; the discovery of the married woman's guilt, the loss of home and children and finally destitution. Societies' concern at this problem culminated in the notorious Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1865 and 1871. However, although *Margaret Returning from the Fountain* also deals with the consequences of moral transgression, its literary origins would render it more acceptable for a respectable female art collector and render the spectator less likely to reflect too closely upon the desperate situation of the modern 'fallen woman'.<sup>866</sup> However, it would not have been an obvious choice of work for a respectable young woman at a time when it was said of prostitutes that 'it is discreditable to a woman even to be supposed to know of their existence'.<sup>867</sup> In fact it has been suggested that philanthropy gave middle-class women an elevated status in rescue work that enabled them to deal with otherwise distasteful situations and occupations, enabling them to sympathise whilst retaining their feminine respectability.<sup>868</sup> Notwithstanding this, following the death of her parents in 1844

Burdett Coutts first major charitable undertaking was her home for 'fallen women', Urania Cottage in Shepherd's Bush, West London.<sup>869</sup>

This idea of a home belonged to Charles Dickens. It is not known what inspired it but he was acquainted with two prison governors, George Chesterton of Coldbath Fields Prison, and Augustus Tracey of the Westminster House of Correction and therefore had the means of communicating readily with their inmates.<sup>870</sup> Dickens had a ready sympathy for prostitutes which he conveys in his novels, most notably in the character of Nancy in *Oliver Twist*. He seems to have been fascinated by these women's lives and also seen them as

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<sup>866</sup> Focussed on the garrison towns in particular there was nothing to stop 'respectable women' from being arrested, and after great campaigning the Act was repealed.

<sup>867</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 138.

<sup>868</sup> Cherry, *Painting Women*, p. 178.

<sup>869</sup> W. R. Grey in 'Prostitution' *The Westminster Review* No. 53 (1850) p. 2 quoted in Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 138.

<sup>870</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 14.

possible source material for his novels. He certainly guarded his time with them closely. It was he that interviewed potential inmates and noted down their life stories and jealously guarded his notes about them.<sup>871</sup>

Urania Cottage was not unique in its emphasis on a 'home' for such women. Similar ventures were subsequently set up in Leicester and Lincoln, but Urania Cottage was the first.<sup>872</sup> Apparently moved by the plight of prostitutes Burdett Coutts could see only too obviously from the windows of her home in Piccadilly, she sought to provide a refuge where young women might be given help to abjure their former way of life in a kindlier way than in the Magdalene Homes and other penitentiaries which were the alternatives at the time.<sup>873</sup> The actual running of the home was however down to Charles Dickens. Dicken's view of Urania Cottage actually had more in common with the Unitarian approach than the evangelical.<sup>874</sup> Unitarians believed in the innate purity of the individual while realising that the environment and circumstances could directly influence the direction of people's lives. It followed therefore that pleasant settings could give a person a chance to reform themselves.<sup>875</sup> The evangelical approach however, was generally much more punitive and harsh as a result of their belief in original sin and the need to battle against it.<sup>876</sup>

According to Charles Osborne, Burdett Coutts thought her father had first met Dickens when he was a reporter in the Gallery of the House of Commons.<sup>877</sup> Their mutual hatred of the Poor Law drew them together and Dickens was to prove a tireless worker for Burdett Coutts. Dickens typified the 'men of action' that Burdett Coutts admired and he was to

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<sup>871</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 57.

<sup>872</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 132.

<sup>873</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 133.

<sup>874</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 54.

<sup>875</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 132.

<sup>876</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 132.

<sup>877</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

provide her with fifteen years of help in her work.<sup>878</sup> Osborne's biographical notes in the British Library record that she admired his genius, sympathy with the masses, fearlessness in attacking abuses, generous impulses and 'earnestness of purpose'.<sup>879</sup> He personified the self-made man who 'bore upon them the stamp of their early surroundings... a lack of what is generally termed polish and whose susceptibility had a strong attraction... not only in the case of men of genius but in every-day life'.<sup>880</sup> In addition she appreciated Dickens's sense of humour. However, despite their strong friendship, the relationship was very much one of an attraction of opposites, Charles Osborne observed that: 'suspense was at all times intolerable to Dickens ... to Miss Burdett Coutts suspense was as natural as the air she breathed'.<sup>881</sup> Osborne credits Dickens with reducing Burdett Coutts's tendency to narrowness due to her obvious lack of direct knowledge of the lives of the poor.<sup>882</sup> According to Osborne, Dickens also did not share her strong attachment to the Church of

England and managed to divert her from a tendency to see charitable works via the Church as her main objective.<sup>883</sup>

Dickens was of the opinion that philanthropy began at home, or in activities connected with the domestic sphere.<sup>884</sup> He had little time for ladies who concerned themselves with the plight of people overseas and ignored the want at home.<sup>885</sup> He targeted philanthropy in several novels, most notably in *Bleak House* (1853), in which he satirized the philanthropist

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<sup>878</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>879</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>880</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>881</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>882</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>883</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>884</sup> Christianson, *Philanthropy*, p. 84.

<sup>885</sup> Christianson, *Philanthropy*, p. 89.

in the form of Mrs Jellaby who is too busy concerning herself with the plight of Africans to concern herself with the disorder in her home and her husband's impending bankruptcy: For Dickens it was not the fault of philanthropy but how it was conducted and where. Burdett Coutts's exacting devotion to duty was matched by Dickens' enormous energies. She was unsparing in her dedication to her work and expected the same from others: 'she liked her wishes to be carried out with the same care, forethought and avoidance of flurry which uniformly marked her own serene and unruffled methods of dealing with affairs, whether great or small'.<sup>886</sup> Burdett Coutts was also very close to the Dickens household and it took the breakdown of the Dickens's marriage to cause a rift in the relationship with Dickens that was never entirely repaired.<sup>887</sup> In fact, Osborne records that Angela Burdett Coutts made a point of seeing more of Mrs Dickens after the separation than she had ever done before and 'no one exhibited more consideration for her after Dickens's death'.<sup>888</sup>

In 1847 Dickens wrote to Burdett Coutts on the subject of Urania Cottage:

The design is simply as you and I agreed, to appeal to them by means of affection, kindness and trustfulness...to improve them by education and example - establish habits of the most rigid order, punctuality and neatness but to make as great a variety in their daily lives as will admit of - and to render them as an innocently cheerful Family while they live together there. <sup>889</sup>

Urania Cottage was very much Dickens' project albeit financed by Burdett Coutts. Although she was consulted and informed of everything that happened at the house it was

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<sup>886</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>887</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 179.

<sup>888</sup> Burdett-Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>889</sup> Letter from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 28 October 1847 in Johnson, *Letters*, p. 97.

Dickens who supervised most of the day to day running of it.<sup>890</sup> He had direct knowledge of the sort of people who were its inmates, which Burdett Coutts could never have, and according to Osborne, was able to 'cut through to the heart of the matter'.<sup>891</sup> It was wrong to talk to a prostitute about 'duty to society' he said, 'society has used her ill and turned away from her and she cannot expect to take much heed of its rights or wrongs'.<sup>892</sup> Dickens appealed to potential inmates with a letter which appeared to address them personally and uses the appeal of one woman speaking to another, the unnamed Burdett Coutts:

...a lady in this town, who, from the windows of her house, has seen such as you going past at night and has felt her heart bleed at the sight. She is what is called a great lady; but she has looked after you with compassion, as being of her own sex and nature; and the thought of such fallen women has troubled her in her bed. <sup>893</sup>

Financial considerations apart, it is arguable that the only way that Dickens as a man could have been involved so intensely with such a venture was with the partnership of such a well-known respectable woman, and he was at great pains to both involve her and emphasise her involvement to others.<sup>894</sup> Although men did involve themselves directly in the work of rescuing 'fallen women', men in the public eye such as William Gladstone walking the streets of London trying to 'save' prostitutes laid themselves open to gossip and having their motives impugned. Interestingly, when letters from Dickens to a supervisor at Urania Cottage, a Mrs Morson, came to light in 2001 the *Times* took delight in connecting the famous novelist with prostitutes.<sup>895</sup>

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<sup>890</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 57.

<sup>891</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>892</sup> Johnson, *Letters*, p. 225.

<sup>893</sup> Dickens' *Appeal to Fallen Women* reprinted from *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1995-2002), vol.5, in Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 253.

<sup>894</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 53.

<sup>895</sup> On 15 June 2001 *The Times* reported that fourteen previously unknown letters from Charles Dickens to Georgina Morson, a supervisor at Urania Cottage, had been found in books belonging to Judith Hughes, a descendant of Mrs. Morson, when her estate was being catalogued for auction.

Owing to the reluctance of prostitutes in particular to apply to the home, the occupants were drawn from a variety of places such as the Ragged Schools, Magdalene Hospitals or workhouses, or were some of the many who failed to make a living as needlewomen.<sup>896</sup> A letter in the Westminster City archives from William Tennant, vicar of her church of St Stephen's, Westminster, and an aide to Burdett Coutts, reveals something of the selection criteria:

...went to St. George's Hospital to visit the young person into whose fitness for the "House" you kindly permitted me to enquire. I am of the opinion she is unfit because: i) her present illness is of a scrofulous character that after cure may at any time break out afresh, ii) her habitation and the low condition to which this poor young creature has been reduced render it more fit that she should become an inmate of the Magdalene House than of your Asylum, iii) she has made statements which are untrue.<sup>897</sup>

Burdett Coutts was in the privileged position of being able to employ other people, such as William Tennant, as her agents.<sup>898</sup> Dickens was the most famous, although his interest in her projects was arguably as great if not greater than hers. As an obituary article in the *Manchester Guardian* points out:

She had under her control what was virtually a non-official department of State - secretaries, overlookers, visitors, committees, all working with her money and all advising her as to the best way of laying it out. Her organisation of charity was almost more wonderful than the charity itself, though the latter naturally only attracted public attention, and the machinery of distribution was unknown to all but a few.<sup>899</sup>

Arguably it is this ability to distance herself that also contributed to her failing to capture

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<sup>896</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 46.

<sup>897</sup> Letter dated 5 January 1849, WCA G1/ 1-66.

<sup>898</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, pp. 162-65.

<sup>899</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (31 December 1906).

the public imagination as more 'hands on' philanthropic figures such as Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale.

Urania Cottage was a bold experiment which lasted from 1847-1862 and was generally regarded as a success. Unfortunately it suffered from the collapse of Dickens' marriage when the relationship between Burdett Coutts and Dickens cooled.<sup>900</sup> Although Burdett Coutts maintained her interest in the plight of young women facing a life on the streets (in 1882 she wrote in support of legislation to protect such girls), without Dickens' enormous involvement it could not survive.<sup>901</sup> It has been calculated that the project cost Burdett Coutts the modern equivalent of seventy two thousand pounds per year, a considerable sum.<sup>902</sup> It was not until the 1860s that women undertook such work with prostitutes in any great numbers and it may well be that as an aristocrat Burdett Coutts felt above the concerns of middle-class morality.<sup>903</sup> Like others of her class and those below her she had society's permission to involve herself in the accepted outlet for gentlewomen, philanthropy, albeit for Burdett Coutts, on a grand scale. With this social confidence, it is arguable that she felt few qualms about dealing with the prostitution issue which middle-class women still preferred to ignore.

### **Education: Class and Control**

Angela Burdett Coutts's vision of society was essentially conservative and class-based. She believed in 'a natural order of things' whereby 'everyone must know their place', although unusually for the times, she did not subscribe to the concept of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving'.<sup>904</sup> Within this was the ideal of social duty: 'To whatever class a person may

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<sup>900</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 243.

<sup>901</sup> Prochaska, *Philanthropy*, p. 154.

<sup>902</sup> Hartley, *Charles Dickens*, p. 60.

<sup>903</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 138.

<sup>904</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.



belong, an industrious discharge of the duties of that position in life is a social and religious obligation'.<sup>905</sup> She placed great importance on the connection between Church and State, and believed state control was the best device for the maintenance of the Church of England as it had been re-established in the sixteenth century.<sup>906</sup> She believed firmly in deeds, not words, and in a particular form of patriotism, a special quality that she felt belonged to the British alone and which manifested itself in the empire.<sup>907</sup> Within these parameters, Osborne stated that she could talk to anyone and make them think she was most interested in that subject but having formed an opinion she stuck firmly to it no matter how convincing the opposite viewpoint.<sup>908</sup> In matters concerning education she displayed a characteristically practical approach as one may expect from someone who saw education as essentially character-forming rather than intellectual.

Angela Burdett Coutts was not the only member of the aristocracy to involve herself in public philanthropy. Lady Jersey was a pioneering philanthropist as was the Duchess of Sutherland who succeeded her as 'Queen of London Society'.<sup>909</sup> Often such philanthropy was focussed on educational matters. Lady Noel Byron, the estranged wife of the poet, was also interested in politics but found no outlet for her interest and by the 1830s was running several model schools on her estate.<sup>910</sup> Similarly, Henrietta, wife of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Stanley of Alderley found herself stranded on the family estates in Cheshire and began to involve

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<sup>905</sup> *Baroness Burdett-Coutts: A Sketch of Her Public Life and Works*. Prepared for the Lady Managers of the World's Columbia Exposition by Command of H.R.H Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck (Chicago: A.C McClurg, 1893), p. 43.

<sup>906</sup> BL 46405A.

<sup>907</sup> BL 46405A.

<sup>908</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>909</sup> Peter Mandler 'From Almack's to Willis's: Aristocratic Women and Politics, 1815-1867' in Amanda Vickery ed., *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 163.

<sup>910</sup> Joan Pierson, *The Real Lady Byron* (London: Robert Hale, 1992), p. 188.

herself in local education matters and was a founder of Girton College, Cambridge.<sup>911</sup>

Angela Burdett Coutts was similarly involved in education but with an emphasis on practical skills for the working classes. In a speech made in the drawing room of a Mrs. Fletcher Bennet in Tulse Hill, London, in November 1888 Burdett Coutts spoke of the activities of the Ragged School Workers Union, or R.S.W.U, which included giving poor children religious instruction, helping the fatherless and emphasizing above all the preaching of the gospel – Sunday Schools, gospel services for children, Bible classes, open-air preaching, tract distribution, mothers meetings, maternity societies and other works of Christian philanthropy.<sup>912</sup> It is easy to see Angela Burdett Coutts's anti-intellectual stance sitting comfortably with this practical philosophy; and indeed she was deeply involved in educational work, helping to establish elementary schools, training colleges, night schools, free schools, technical institutions and institutions to further the physical well being of the young.<sup>913</sup> In May 1887 she spoke at the Annual Festival of Ragged School Unions at Exeter: 'how gratifying it has been to me to give eight hundred prizes for good conduct, honesty and steadiness, and all the more that it is indeed a high and flattering testimonial to the real value and satisfactory results of Ragged School teaching'.<sup>914</sup> Educational activities were also very much to the forefront of middle-class philanthropic activity; teaching in Sunday Schools for example was considered highly appropriate for young unmarried women, training them in public service and reinforcing the line between the classes.<sup>915</sup> Aristocratic women were often more inclined to support active philanthropy in towns by providing money, attending social events with a philanthropic purpose and sanctioning the use of their names in connection with good causes.<sup>916</sup> Although all women were taught care of the

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<sup>911</sup> Mandler in Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*, pp. 163, 164.

<sup>912</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>913</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>914</sup> Address by Angela Burdett Coutts 9 May 1887, Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>915</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 91.

<sup>916</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 91.

poor as their responsibility, charity was often unthinking; when Consuelo Vanderbilt married the Duke of Marlborough in 1895 she was appalled to discover that there was a long-held practice at Blenheim of packing leftovers into tins for the poor irrespective of the mixture of food, rather like pig swill.<sup>917</sup> Such thoughtlessness contributed to the 'Lady Bountiful' image of the aristocracy, dispensing benevolence with 'no understanding, little compassion and small consistency'.<sup>918</sup>

Although the failure of the landowning classes to contribute to the education of children on their estates was commented on by the 1861 Commission on popular education, the provision of schools was not uncommon on many estates.<sup>919</sup> The Rothschilds were prominent in these initiatives; Constance Rothschild and her sister Anne began their first school in Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire and Lady Londonderry built a school for all the children in the area of her estate and also obtained a government grant toward it. Anne, Duchess of Athole funded and took an active part in the supervision and funding of suitable school teachers and mediating in disputes in the school she founded for girls in Dunkild.<sup>920</sup> Arguably, all these are within the traditional philanthropic interests of the landed gentry, rural in nature and part of a patriarchy which also sought to exercise social control. Angela Burdett did not have a rural estate in the traditional sense, and I can find no evidence that she desired day-to-day control over the schemes that she developed. She liked to be closely involved in the development of a scheme and kept informed about it but then seems to have been content for others to run it.

Burdett Coutts believed women were particularly suited to teaching.<sup>921</sup> Until the 1870 Education Act most of the work for providing education for the children of the poor was

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<sup>917</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 104.

<sup>918</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 111.

<sup>919</sup> Anne Summers, 'A Home from Home, Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century' in Sandra Burman ed., in *Fit Work for Women* (1979), p. 33, cited in Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 91.

<sup>920</sup> Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 93.

<sup>921</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

carried out by the Church of England.<sup>922</sup> In much of its work it was concerned with religious instruction: 'Missionary work among the poor', rather than education in an intellectual form. Indeed, Lord Shaftsbury, whose ideas moulded the London Ragged School Union, lamented the 1870 Act as 'the godless non-Bible system,' and predicted that 'the R.S.U must perish under this all-conquering march of educational power'.<sup>923</sup>

Whitelands College was established in Chelsea in 1841 under the management of the National Society as part of the political strategy of the Church of England to retain its authority in the field of education.<sup>924</sup> The National Society trained teachers for National and the Church of England schools with the intention of producing 'a superior type of parochial schoolmistress' and had itself been formed as a response to the failures of the Church of England to adequately educate the poor.<sup>925</sup> Recognising the need for improving education, Church and State fought over who should provide it.<sup>926</sup> By the 1840s the National Society, backed by the Anglican church, was receiving over eighty per cent of school funding and the question of training teachers now came to the fore.<sup>927</sup> Whitelands College for the training of teachers had the backing of several representatives of the aristocracy including Burdett Coutts and from 1850 she was listed as a donor.

In 1854 Burdett Coutts instigated prizes for 'common things' at Whitelands.<sup>928</sup> These were

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<sup>922</sup> John Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers in Victorian London: A Study of Three Colleges*, [www.billygriff.sathosting.net/seed/](http://www.billygriff.sathosting.net/seed/) 2005, Chapter 1, p. 1 accessed 13 November 2009.

<sup>923</sup> Not all R.S.U.s would have held such views, Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p. 150.

<sup>924</sup> Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 2.

<sup>925</sup> Earl of Harrowby, 1850 in the Whitelands' College Archives quoted in Malcolm Cole, *Be Like Daisies: John Ruskin and the Cultivation of Beauty at Whitelands College* (St. Albans: The Guild of St. George by Brentham Press, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>926</sup> Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 2.

<sup>927</sup> Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 2.

<sup>928</sup> The prizes were awarded for the following 'common things': price, nourishing qualities and preparation of food; cost and durability of materials, cutting out and making of clothes, and best ways of mending, altering and keeping them in neat and wholesome condition; household management; duties of servants including moral qualities and personal habits are likely to render them most useful and happy; care of children and care

open to mistresses and pupils in schools connected with the Church of England in Middlesex, with a separate set of prizes for students at Whitelands, which was made the centre of the examinations.<sup>929</sup> Burdett Coutts saw education for the lower classes as essentially practical and character-forming. She stressed the importance of the knowledge of 'common things', such as cookery, housewifery, needlework and thrift. She emphasised 'breadth of view', and was opposed to anything which smacked of mechanical instruction or systems of payment by results: 'a pass or not to pass mentality'.<sup>930</sup> In fact she deplored the necessity of examinations, particularly for the female mind as she thought it placed too high a strain on their faculties and would adversely affect family life, bringing in the pressures of the outside world into a husband's family haven.<sup>931</sup> Indeed, in one of her yearly addresses to Whitelands in 1859, Burdett Coutts quoted approvingly the remarks of the Recorder of Hull as to the difficulty of obtaining a:

trustworthy female servant...[because] young women in that class of life are monstrously over-educated for their status and calling...minds distempered and inflated by a smattering of knowledge and accomplishments totally unfitted for them, disturbing all their notions of dutiful, respectable and happy subordination, and giving them a disgust for the plain paths of duty.<sup>932</sup>

Burdett Coutts's basic view of lower-class female education also met opposition from some of the parents of children who attended the Westminster School she founded. In a letter in the Westminster City Archives dated 23 March 1852 the Head of St Stephen's School which she had founded complains of the difficulty of getting girls at St Stephen's to do 'plain work', such as needlework and laundry. These girls were the children of small shopkeepers and 'the better class of mechanic' who were paying small amounts for their

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of sick, including cooking for invalids, BL 46406B.

<sup>929</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>930</sup> Burdett-Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>931</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Institutional Association of Lancashire and Cheshire, May 1859. MS. Pierpoint Morgan quoted in Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 163.

<sup>932</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts, *Miss Burdett Coutts' Prizes for Common Things, 1854-56* (London: Hatchard & Co, 1860), p. 107.

children's education. A teacher wrote to Burdett Coutts: 'I was asked if it was intended to bring up the girls as servants of all work'.<sup>933</sup>

However, Burdett Coutts could be sensitive to the practical needs of children from the very poor. In addressing the Ragged Schools Union in April 1894 she exhorted members to limit their religious instruction to the 'Broad truth':

I set great store by this question, because it seems to me that no persons, however well-intentioned, should perplex the minds of these unfortunate creatures with religious mysteries, that young people with the best advantages, can but imperfectly understand. I heard a lady visitor ... propounding questions in reference of the 'Lamb of God' which I most unquestionably would not put to my children, recollecting the immense absurdities that were suggested to my own childhood by the injurious catechising.<sup>934</sup>

The first scholars at Whitelands were drawn from the lower aspirational middle class, small businessmen, minor officials and clerks, sometimes from clergy with a poor living.<sup>935</sup> The hours were long and the work hard. Expectations for the graduates were not high. Marianne Thornton, mother of E.M. Forster wrote that : 'there seems such a desire to make them really humble, unpretending village teachers, making them clean, cook and iron (not wash) that they mayn't fancy themselves ladies'.<sup>936</sup> Arguably this approach deterred applicants from the professional class who, by the 1850s, it was trying to attract.<sup>937</sup> Burdett Coutts was a important patron of Whitelands during this time. The mission of Whitelands was, she said:

To encourage mistresses who will strive to promote...a sound scriptural education, industrious habits, and such an amount of information upon all subjects connected with their wants and occupations as will render them

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<sup>933</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J5/1-2.

<sup>934</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>935</sup> Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 5.

<sup>936</sup> E. M. Forster, *A Domestic Biography* (Edward Arnold, undated) quoted in Cole, *Be Like Daisies*, p. 3.

<sup>937</sup> Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 5.

happier and more useful in their respective stations and classes. Social classes must exist; but to whatever class a person may belong, the industrious discharge of the duties of that station in life is a social and religious obligation.<sup>938</sup>

It was felt that middle-class elementary teachers could counteract the dismal effects of a working-class environment and that school would provide a counter-example for the pupils and help to reduce crime, vandalism and violence, inculcating a respect for property and authority.<sup>939</sup> Essentially, it was a means of social control. Burdett Coutts seems to have taken a serious interest in a move to attract girls from a higher social class. In 1857 she published a pamphlet: *Remunerative and Honourable Employment for the Daughters of the Middle Classes, and Information as to the Government plan for Promoting Elementary Education* with the intention of encouraging young women from the middle classes to apply to the school; it would provide useful employment for educated young women and raise the status of teachers. The current situation, with schoolmistresses coming from the ranks of the 'extremely humble' was not 'socially advantageous'.<sup>940</sup> Unfortunately the exercise was not successful as the Colleges annual report for 1858 makes clear:

In the year 1858 a large number of the daughters of the middle class came forward. They were examined, and in all cases they were found to be so backward, and to have been so imperfectly taught, that with every desire to encourage such young persons, it was impossible to admit them to the Examination with the slightest hope of success. <sup>941</sup>

Burdett Coutts seems to have no taken no further part in the campaign but despite the failure of the experiment, Whitelands continued for some years to try to 'raise the tone' of the social background of its scholars.<sup>942</sup> Similar concerns had arisen about the employment

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<sup>938</sup> Whitelands' College Archives, 1856, p. 91 quoted in Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 7.

<sup>939</sup> William Knighton, *Training in Streets and Schools. A Lecture on the Training System of Education* (1855) pp.148-52, cited in Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 7.

<sup>940</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts, *Project for Young Ladies as School Mistresses: A Circular*. English Journal of Education, XII (April 1858), cited in Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 7.

<sup>941</sup> Whiteland's College, Annual Report for 1858, pp 4-5, quoted Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 8.

<sup>942</sup> Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 7.

of governesses, traditionally drawn from the 'genteel class' for whom there were few alternatives, concern was voiced when tradesmen's daughters started to enter the profession.

It was felt that only well-bred women could be trusted with the children of the upper classes for only well-bred women were morally reliable.<sup>943</sup>

Burdett Coutts's comments on things of which she would have had little knowledge herself, make patronising reading today; for example, her comments on the little ingenuity shown by the poor in the preparation of food:

There is so much variety, and many small luxuries happily within the reach of the labouring man or artisans family, that the *Hints on Cookery and Recipes* have been added to show how much pleasant variety might be obtained by the exercise of a little thought and economy.<sup>944</sup>

Such views were not unique but reflect an insensitivity in one who was so closely involved in work with the poor. Burdett Coutts also urged teachers to dissuade girls from wearing cheap and tawdry finery, according to Charles Osborne: 'she pointed out that a style of dress unsuitable for the occupation of the wearer showed a vast want of self-respect and of commonsense'.<sup>945</sup> A concern with clothes and entitlement to wear certain colours and styles was not the prerogative of the Victorians - sumptuary laws can be traced back to Ancient Greece - but the nineteenth century was particularly concerned with dress and morality.<sup>946</sup> The morality of early Whitelands students was carefully guarded. The college was committed to preparing the students for a modest, disciplined and self-denying life of public devotion.<sup>947</sup> Dresses were to be either black or of a dark colour trimmed neatly with

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<sup>943</sup> Mary Poosey, 'The Anathemised Race: the Governess, Jane Eyre' in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid. Victorian England* (1988), pp. 126-163, cited in Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p. 128.

<sup>944</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>945</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>946</sup> Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, p. 60.

<sup>947</sup> Rev. Baber, Chaplain to Whitelands College, Evidence to the Newcastle Commission, Parliamentary Papers 1861, XXI cited in Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 9.



ribbon of a single colour, pink or red ribbons were forbidden, as were flowers. No bows or ribbons were to be worn in the hair and jewellery was also forbidden.<sup>948</sup> The Principal commented in 1860 that teacher graduates do not know how to spend their money and that consequently a good deal of money is 'spent very foolishly, particularly in dress'.<sup>949</sup> Burdett Coutts shared these concerns and expounded her thoughts on dress in her introduction to the published edition of prize-winning essays for her 'common things':

...a passion for dress is the mainspring whence comes the larger proportion of our female prisoners, and since the prisons tell this dreary tale of foolishness and temptation, and whilst the means of fostering the passions and of offering allurements to its gratifications, are easily obtained...without care and reflection, those nice powers of discrimination implants in all minds, and that feelings of self respect, will fail to be cultivated which leads persons to respect their own class and station and not only to lower its respectability and their own by unbecoming conduct or manners, but to avoid the adoption of a style of dress either unsuitable to their occupation or discreditable from its extravagance.<sup>950</sup>

In fact Angela Burdett Coutts herself had a great love of elaborate and expensive dress. In his 1845 diary Thomas Moore recalled a visit to Burdett Coutts following on from a ball held the previous night in which she had worn the tiara belonging to Marie Antoinette: 'and on my asking her what altogether might be the value of her dress last night, she answered in her quiet way ' " I think about a hundred thousand pounds" '.<sup>951</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* gave an account of this ball. The guests had been invited to dress in costumes of the period 1740-1750, and it noted that of the 1,200 guests:

every possible variety of colour, texture and detail and the greatest

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<sup>948</sup> Ralph Cardoso Denis, *The Educational Eye and the Industrial Hand: Art and Design. Instruction for the Working Class in Mid-Victorian Britain*, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1995, vol. I, p. 136 quoted in Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 188.

<sup>949</sup> Baber, evidence to the Newcastle Commission, cited in Seed, *Training Female Schoolteachers*, p. 9.

<sup>950</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Common Things*, p. xii.

<sup>951</sup> Burdett Patterson, *Angela Burdett Coutts*, p. 38.

magnificence of embroidery, and jewelled decoration consistent with propriety were brought to bear...among dresses distinguished for their splendour... Miss Burdett Coutts...<sup>952</sup>

Fashion was created for the upper classes; it was another manifestation not just of a certain lifestyle but a forging of identity based on another possessable commodity, clothing.<sup>953</sup> Clothing was relatively unavailable to the working classes and rarely new.<sup>954</sup> Upper and middle-class women devoted enormous amounts of time and money to their clothing and Burdett Coutts's dresses would have been made in Paris or at least by a top tier of dressmakers in London.<sup>955</sup> It was a common means of signifying to others one's social status and reinforcing class allegiances, carefully scrutinised at social gatherings and therefore needing to be perfectly executed.<sup>956</sup> Newspapers carried special reports on fashion; *The New York Times* advised its readers on the dress worn by London's High Society and in an article entitled 'Gowns at a Garden Party' in 1880, an account of a garden party given by the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House, it singled out Burdett Coutts as wearing 'pale mauve of a pinkish tint, and a white bonnet trimmed with mauve orchids', although deceptively simple, the expense and rarity of orchids at this time would not have been lost on the assembly nor the readership, especially at a time when her scandalous marriage was still in everyone's mind.<sup>957</sup>

Portraits of Burdett Coutts support a picture of a woman who enjoyed clothes and jewellery throughout her life. A formal portrait from the 1840s, portrays Burdett Coutts in a library interior (fig. 68). The portrait conveys the image of a respectable, rather serious young

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<sup>952</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (11 June 1845).

<sup>953</sup> Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 169.

<sup>954</sup> Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 41.

<sup>955</sup> Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, p. 138.

<sup>956</sup> Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, p. 100.

<sup>957</sup> *The New York Times* (3 August 1880).

woman, staring straight ahead out of the canvas, whilst resting her head on her hand, a conventional device repeated in portraits of Burdett Coutts throughout her life. The sitter is placed firmly into the domestic setting, albeit not in a 'female space' such as a drawing room or other reception room, but in the more 'intellectual' location of the library, which hints at a thoughtful person. The most striking feature of the portrait however are her clothes, a fashionable, boldly striped dress which draws the eye and places Burdett Coutts firmly as a member of the leisured class. The artist has gone to considerable trouble to depict the flowing lace at her cuffs, an expensive material combined with the fashionable low neck and shoulder line that only a member of the upper classes would have worn. The simple necklace draws attention to her neck and shoulders and the ring on her finger similarly draws the eye to the long delicate fingers and face of the sitter. The deceptive simplicity of this portrait may be contrasted with the elaborate dress of the photographic portraits taken of Burdett Coutts in her cartes de visite of the 1870s and 80s (fig. 69). Cartes de visite catered for the public appetite for images of 'celebrities' and were often collected and pasted in albums.<sup>958</sup> They were uniformly small, of relatively low price and unlike commissioned oil paintings depicted an image of the sitter that they wished to convey to a much larger audience; participation in them was also considered by many sitters as part of a public duty.<sup>959</sup> These unsmiling portraits of Burdett Coutts conform to other depictions of women in the public eye who wished to convey a picture of themselves as women of respectability, honour and virtue, of people who knew how to conform to a very proper code of dress.<sup>960</sup> The earliest one of Burdett Coutts, from the 1860s depicts her in very fashionable day dress, heavily flounced and carrying a flowing shawl. Her head is crowned with an imposing and formidably elaborate cap and veil and she stares straight ahead, a book lying as a prop beside her. It is the elaborate dress details that draw the eye and threaten to overshadow the sitter herself. The total effect is of a fashionable yet

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<sup>958</sup> Probably Julius Jacobs (1811-1882), National Portrait Gallery Icon notes.

<sup>959</sup> Roger Hargreaves, 'Putting Faces to the Names: Social and Celebrity Portrait Photography' in Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves eds, *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2001), p. 50.

<sup>960</sup> Colleen Denney, *Women, Portraiture and the Crisis of Identity in Victorian England: My Lady Scandalous Reconsidered* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 96.

respectable wealthy upper-class lady. The final portraits, taken in the 1880s, one in close up, the other three-quarter length and obviously taken at the same time, are less overtly elaborate in dress, but Burdett Coutts is wearing more obvious signifiers of luxury: a fashionable choker, a many tiered pearl necklace and fine lace mittens. The dress itself is deceptively simple at first glance but closer examination reveals the elaborate ruching on the bodice and expensive lace collar and cuffs. In these displays Burdett Coutts is utilising all the signifiers of class to create and project a specific identity for herself. It is clear that she did not feel she had to dress down or wear the 'reformed' dress of the aesthete or arts and crafts movement to be taken seriously.<sup>961</sup> In this final portrait, the projection of wealth is understated, the dress although somewhat sombre, relies on subtle detail to convey and emphasise the high class and taste of Burdett Coutts to its audience.

The nature of Whitelands changed in 1874 when John Fane Thorpe became Principal of the college.<sup>962</sup> He aimed to raise the quality of the education there to university degree level and it was during his time as Principal that John Ruskin became closely associated with the college.<sup>963</sup> By this time Burdett Coutts's involvement in the institution had declined. Although Ruskin stated 'let a girl's education be as serious as a boys. You bring up your girls as if they were meant for sideboard ornaments and then complain of their frivolity', his view of the role of the female was essentially limited to the home and he did not advocate higher education for women.<sup>964</sup> These views would have probably struck a sympathetic chord with Burdett Coutts. She would not have approved of the emphasis on gaining the equivalent of a university degree and as has been stated previously, had no time for women in higher education. Indeed higher education for women was not favoured by evangelicals as they feared it would destroy women's faith and modesty and distance them from the

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<sup>961</sup> Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, p. 67.

<sup>962</sup> Cole, *Be Like Daisies*, pp. 4-8.

<sup>963</sup> Cole, *Be Like Daisies*, p. 8.

<sup>964</sup> John Ruskin, 'Of Queens Gardens' in *Sesame & Lilies* (London & Toronto: J M Dent & Sons, 1907, repr. 1905), p. 64.

Christian duty of motherhood.<sup>965</sup> She would probably have seen as another example of over-educating the lower classes. Burdett Coutts did however, believe firmly in the influence of flowers, music and buildings upon the mind and it is likely that she would have approved of Ruskin's emphasis on the powers of nature and art as a moral influence upon the students.<sup>966</sup> She would also have welcomed the work ethic expounded by Ruskin, that a master served his employee fairly and in return received equitable service from their works.<sup>967</sup> Such ethics, and the value placed upon hard work and service to others was very much in line with contemporary evangelical thinking. Although Burdett Coutts ceased to take an active part in Whitelands after 1872 she maintained an interest in the College's 's activities and continued to attend prize-giving ceremonies for many years.<sup>968</sup>

Burdett Coutts's last years saw her continue her charity work, dividing her time between Stratton Street and Holly Lodge. In October 1906 Burdett Coutts left Holly Lodge to spend the winter at Stratton Street but at Christmas a cold developed into bronchitis and she died on 30 December 1906, aged ninety-two. Despite her wish to be buried at her church of St Stephen's, Westminster, opposite Dr. and Mrs. Brown, Ashmead accepted the more prestigious offer of a burial in Westminster Abbey.<sup>969</sup> On 5 January 1907 she was buried at the foot of the memorial to her friend and fellow philanthropist Lord Shaftesbury, the site marked by a plain stone with letters of brass.<sup>970</sup>

Angela Burdett Coutts's philanthropy was widespread and far-reaching, extending beyond Britain to Ireland, Turkey, Canada and Africa. Among her many charitable acts she helped to provide relief for 'exceptional distress' in Ireland in 1862 and established a Fishery Training School there; financed three parties in succession to emigrate to Canada in 1863

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<sup>965</sup> Steinbach, *Women In England*, p. 179.

<sup>966</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 63097.

<sup>967</sup> Cole, *Be Like Daisies*, p. 5

<sup>968</sup> Cole, *Be Like Daisies*, pp. 15, 17, 22.

<sup>969</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 225.

<sup>970</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 226.

and established a school in Nova Scotia; gave aid to hospitals and numerous charities to help animals, including work for the R.S.P.C.A; enabled the foundation and became the first President of the N.S.P.C.A, established the South African Aid Committee to help men injured as a result of the Zulu Wars and contributed towards efforts against the slave trade in Africa.<sup>971</sup> Invariably these were practical responses to real need but also served as vehicles for her own patronage and in many ways the perpetuation of her name. It certainly involved her in philanthropic work which invariably contained an element of social control. Its most tangible aspect was in the form of building projects and of all her philanthropic work this is the only example of her legacy still visible today.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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<sup>971</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

## ANGELA BURDETT COUTTS: PATRON OF ARCHITECTURE

### Patron of Church Architecture

In a poor suburb of the city...a new Gothic church was building...month after month I watched it growing; I had seen one window after another fitted with tracery, one buttress after another finished off with its carved pinnacle; then I had watched the skeleton of the roof gradually clothed in tiling; and then the glazing of the windows...And then a Gothic schoolhouse rose at the churchyard end, and troops of children poured in and out, and women came daily for alms; and when the frosts came on, every morning I saw a crowd, and soup carried away in pitchers, and clothes and blankets given away; it was a pleasant sight, as every new church is to the healthy-minded man...a fresh centre of civilisation, mercy, comfort, for weary hearts relief from frost and hunger, a fresh centre of instruction, humanising, disciplining...to hundreds of little savage spirits, altogether a pleasant sight.<sup>972</sup>

Although Angela Burdett Coutts maintained a vast correspondence with many people, unfortunately comparatively little remains to chronicle her relationships with artists or artistic matters. What does survive is a large correspondence relating to her patronage of her church, St Stephen's in Westminster, London.<sup>973</sup> The correspondence box, which was found in 1977, chiefly contains letters and plans relating to the construction of St Stephen's in the 1840s and the social issues relating to the philanthropic work carried out in this deprived part of London.<sup>974</sup> Although there are few letters from Burdett Coutts herself, the letters addressed to her suggest the large amount of control which Burdett Coutts exercised on the design of the church and focus on matters relating to church architecture and the Anglican church in the mid-nineteenth century.

Angela Burdett Coutts's patronage of St Stephen's, Rochester Row, Westminster, was the first of her great building schemes and the first church endowed and constructed by her.<sup>975</sup>

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<sup>972</sup> Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke* (Littlehampton: Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1970, first pub. 1850), p. 282.

<sup>973</sup> Now in City of Westminster Central Archive, Westminster.

<sup>974</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts.

<sup>975</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 106

The construction of a church by a wealthy private individual was by no means rare in the early Victorian period. London's first privately funded district church on the new model, St Peter's Stepney, was built in 1837-8 by William Cotton, a banker and East End cordage manufacturer.<sup>976</sup> He went on to pay for two further complete East End churches – St Thomas's, Bethnal Green and St Paul's, Bow Common.<sup>977</sup> St Stephen's was conceived partly as a memorial to Burdett Coutts's father who had represented the Westminster constituency for almost all of his parliamentary life, but it was also built at a time when the Anglican church was actively encouraging the building of new churches during a period of great introspection and anxiety.<sup>978</sup> It was a positive and appropriate response by Burdett Coutts as a rich and staunch supporter of the Church of England to the crisis the Church was facing, and enabled her to provide both spiritual and social assistance to a community whilst reinforcing the Church as a form of social control. It also served as a memorial to the woman who built it.

As previously discussed, the nineteenth century was characterised by a looking back on pre-industrial times as a 'golden age'. This manifested itself in a romantic vision of the Middle Ages which permeated architecture, painting and literature.<sup>979</sup> It particularly embraced the Gothic which gradually lost its late eighteenth century associations with mystery, death and superstition and became not *Gothick* but *Gothic*, with new romantic associations of freedom and naturalism.<sup>980</sup> The novels of Sir Walter Scott seemed to portray an idealised society of 'Merrie England' where gallantry and romantic love held sway and of which Cardinal Newman later described as 'silently indoctrinates ... with nobler ideas'.<sup>981</sup> Such nostalgia can

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<sup>976</sup> See C. Brooks and A. Saint, eds., *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 35.

<sup>977</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 4.

<sup>978</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 3.

<sup>979</sup> Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005), p. 79.

<sup>980</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 79.

<sup>981</sup> John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Sua Vita* (1865 rep. 1994), p. 108, cited in Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 80.



be seen as a reaction to the enormous changes which had taken place in European society generally, and especially Britain, as a result of the industrial revolution and the resultant upheaval in society. Some felt that there was too much emphasis on individualism and not enough on society and that this could be laid at the doors of the Reformation.<sup>982</sup> The influx of workers into the cities had led to a displacement in society, the old ties and loyalties which Angela Burdett Coutts referred to in her description of the manor house were no more and society was at risk from a displaced urban working-class which was increasingly irreligious, it was feared that a man not reared in the ethics of the Anglican Church could easily become an atheist and then inevitably a radical<sup>983</sup>.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the Anglican Church also felt itself under threat, particularly from the growing number of Dissenters, most prominent of which were the Methodists. Established in 1739, by the 1790s they formed a significant group outside the established church. In contrast to the Anglican church elite who had often preached against social protest at times of unrest, they drew their support largely from artisans, though not from the increasing urban proletariat who were little catered for spiritually. Between 1807 and 1831 the population aged over fifteen taking communion on Easter Sunday fell from ten per cent to seven per cent while by contrast evangelism grew.<sup>984</sup> The lack of urban churches was felt by many to be a large part of the problem. Others, such as Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) in his polemic of 1836, *Contrasts*, put the blame on the failure of the established religion, Anglicanism, to deal with the problems of contemporary society in the humane fashion of the Middle Ages.<sup>985</sup> In 1851, for the first and last time, the census asked about religious attendance. It revealed that most of those failing to attend church were working class and that attendance was lowest in London and

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<sup>982</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 89.

<sup>983</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 85.

<sup>984</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 4.

<sup>985</sup> A. W. N. Pugin, *Contrasts*, 1836 (Leicester: The Victorian Library, Leicester Press, 1973), p. 15.

the large manufacturing towns.<sup>986</sup> In that same year Henry Mayhew's first three volumes of his survey of the London poor revealed that there was a feeling among the poor that going to church was only for the higher classes:

Religion is a regular puzzle to the costers, a former costermonger told him, they see people come out of church and chapel and as they're mostly well dressed, and as there're very few of their own sort among the church-goers, the costers somehow mix up being religious with being respectable and so they have a queer sort of feeling about it. It's a mystery to them.<sup>987</sup>

If Anglicans had failed to provide for the urban poor there was little spiritual provision for them elsewhere.<sup>988</sup> The Methodists in general were predominantly middle class; the Baptists had little presence in the towns and the Congregationalists believed that Dissenters were an elite who should not try to increase their members.<sup>989</sup> The only groups with an increase of population were the Roman Catholics, chiefly as a result of Irish migration to Britain.<sup>990</sup> The Anglicans perceived that if their numbers were not to seriously decline further they had to target the working classes more sympathetically, rather than scold them for neglect of public worship and their own poverty.<sup>991</sup> The church was an arm of law and order; in an age of deference and dependency it was arguably the most visible and strongest arm of the establishment.<sup>992</sup> Even though the relationship between state and church was not as close as it had been during the eighteenth century, the monarch was its titular head and it drew most of its clergy from the ranks of the aristocracy and gentry, and was content for it to do so well into the nineteenth century. The popular Victorian children's hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful* put it succinctly in a verse no longer printed in today's hymn books: 'The rich

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<sup>986</sup> 'Religious Worship in England and Wales 1854' p. 93 quoted in K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 1.

<sup>987</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour*, I, quoted in Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class*, p. 19.

<sup>988</sup> Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class*, pp. 9-16.

<sup>989</sup> Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class*, p. 14.

<sup>990</sup> Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class*, p. 15.

<sup>991</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 7.

<sup>992</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 2.

man at his castle/the poor man at his gate/God made them high and lowly/and ordered their estate'.<sup>993</sup> In addition to the threat from dissenting groups, Anglicans also had to fight this common perception of the Church of England as being part of the Establishment, as indeed it had been almost indissolubly until the eighteenth century. It remained so, even though a series of Parliamentary Acts had weakened this association; indeed, it was still in living memory that failure to attend church was a legal offence.<sup>994</sup> In rural districts the parish was the most visible sign of local government, its responsibilities including amongst others, street lighting, poor relief and apprenticeships. Many bishops lived like lords and the clergy formed a large number of magistrates.<sup>995</sup>

Another factor in the decline of the Anglican church was the lack of churches. The Anglican Church had been so closely a part of the state that, prior to 1818, a special Act of Parliament had been required in order to raise the funds for the erection of a church.<sup>996</sup> This was a tortuous process which also meant that even if the Act was passed, a subsequent amendment to the contract necessitating a change of contractor would require a new Act before work could recommence.<sup>997</sup> Understandably, this led to a reluctance to build new churches and the growth instead of the 'proprietary chapel' in built-up areas of existing parishes.<sup>998</sup> These chapels were often a private venture between a landlord and a developer to add 'tone' to a development and keep up rental values.<sup>999</sup> They were heavily dependant on pew rents and the attractions of the individual preacher but their status was low and the situation contrasted strongly with the dissenter who only needed a room in which to worship.<sup>1000</sup> As a result there was a lack of churches, especially in urban areas at a time when

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<sup>993</sup> Mrs. Cecil Frances Alexander, *Hymns for Little Children* (originally published 1848, W. Walter, 71<sup>st</sup> ed. 1912).

<sup>994</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 2.

<sup>995</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 2.

<sup>996</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 5.

<sup>997</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 32.

<sup>998</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 32.

<sup>999</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 32.

<sup>1000</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 5.

the cities were increasingly attracting people from the countryside. At the beginning of the nineteenth century twenty per cent of people lived in town with populations over ten thousand, by 1850 the numbers had grown to thirty eight per cent.<sup>1001</sup>

Realising the malaise which was affecting the Anglican Church as a result of its position within the establishment and the poor practices into which it had fallen largely as a result of this, such as misappropriation of tithes by non-resident rectors, nepotism and sinecures, the Anglican church took action.<sup>1002</sup> In 1818 Parliament repealed the requirement for an Act of Parliament for the construction of churches and voted one million pounds for the building of new churches, especially for the rapidly expanding north. This stimulated the Church to organise itself. Charles Blomfield (1786-1857), Bishop of London, personified the revival. For Blomfield the key to Anglican advance in the cities was the creation and endowment of new churches, an expansion which would have to be financed from the church's own resources.<sup>1003</sup> Blomfield was an indefatigable church builder, who saw to an overhaul of the church's function and, with the assistance of Sir Robert Peel, enabled the creation of the Ecclesiastical Commission, now the Church Commission.<sup>1004</sup> In 1835 he launched a fund to build more churches. The Church went on to erect an average of one hundred churches per year between 1840 and the end of the century.<sup>1005</sup> Church building had become a crusade with a rush of competitive building which had little regard for actual demand.<sup>1006</sup> Schools and vicarages were often built alongside these new churches, the majority of the funding coming from private donations.

The crisis within the Anglican Church coincided a spiritual reawakening with many Church

<sup>1001</sup> James Steven Curl, *Victorian Architecture* (London: David and Charles, 1990), p. 12.

<sup>1002</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 7.

<sup>1003</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 7.

<sup>1004</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 35.

<sup>1005</sup> Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1985), p. 193.

<sup>1006</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 30.

Movements and societies, often at undergraduate level, springing up.<sup>1007</sup> Prominent amongst these was the *Young England* movement of George Smyth which favoured a return to what was perceived as the patriarchy of the old church, with a re-emphasis on faith and the private patronage of the local gentry, a powerful old-established aristocracy coupled with an 'almsgiving church' protecting and supported by a grateful peasantry.<sup>1008</sup> Similarly the Oxford Movement was formed by a group of theological students determined to fight against liberalism and the new soulless science.<sup>1009</sup> Their *Tracts for the Times* stressed tradition and a continuity in the Church stretching back to the Middle Ages with no break for the Reformation.<sup>1010</sup> By contrast, the Evangelical Movement of the Church of England rejected these 'High Church' enthusiasms. They tried to teach by experience and example, moderation, temperance and observation of the Sabbath; their faith was characterized by simplicity and sermonising.<sup>1011</sup>

Oxbridge undergraduates enthused about new religion and architectural ideas whilst anti-Catholic legislation in the 1820s led to a backlash and a revival of interest in Roman Catholicism that culminated in the 1829 Roman Catholic Repeal Act.<sup>1012</sup> There was a renewed interest in the Catholic role in society and the Catholic Church benefited from the sympathy aroused by the attacks on it during the French Revolution and the presence of Catholic emigrants and priests in England as a result of the French upheavals.<sup>1013</sup> Henry Mayhew interviewed a coster who could see the practical benefits of Catholicism or any religion or movement which could help the labouring classes. He had noted that Irish were observed to be visited by a priest and taken care of but after all, 'if a missionary came

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<sup>1007</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 7.

<sup>1008</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 7.

<sup>1009</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 84.

<sup>1010</sup> Nigel Yates, *Building, Faith and Worship: The Liturgical Arrangement of Churches 1600-1900* (Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1990, rev. ed. 2000), pp. 129, 130, 131.

<sup>1011</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 155.

<sup>1012</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 87.

<sup>1013</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 84.

among us with plenty of money... he might make us all Christians or Turks or anything he liked'.<sup>1014</sup> The poor were obviously very aware of who was helping them and it was to combat such sympathies that the Anglican church was also fighting.

The early nineteenth-century nostalgia for medieval society also produced a reappraisal of architecture. In 1814 John Britton compiled a guide to England's great cathedrals and illustrated views of both secular and religious buildings.<sup>1015</sup> This sold well to a patriotic audience for whom gothic had begun to be seen as a 'natural style' and eventually synonymous with 'Christian'.<sup>1016</sup> Stefan Muthesius has discussed the evolution of national architectural styles in nineteenth century Europe.<sup>1017</sup> The actual historical origins of a style, such as the gothic in France, were largely irrelevant to the perception of 'national' styles in which the perceived characteristics of a people were felt to be inherent and personified.<sup>1018</sup> Perceptions of 'authenticity' came to the fore with an emphasis on materials and craftsmanship. Gothic was also favoured as part of the Church's assertion of authority in the early 1830s when it felt its privileges to be under attack by government interference.<sup>1019</sup> The Oxford Movement argued that the Church owed its authority through apostolic succession from the early Church, not from its Establishment in the sixteenth century, and that since the seventeenth century this authority had taken the form of Gothic architecture.<sup>1020</sup> Although by the early 1840s doubts had begun to form about these links with the past and there was a feeling that gothic could develop to become a more 'modern' style rather than

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<sup>1014</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour*, I, p. 22.

<sup>1015</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 80.

<sup>1016</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 80.

<sup>1017</sup> Stefan Muthesius, 'Periodisation according to Authenticity, or creating Vigorous Borderlines in Nineteenth Century Architectural History' in *National Identities*, vol. 8, Issue 3 (September 2006), pp. 277-287.

<sup>1018</sup> Muthesius, 'Periodisation', pp. 280, 281.

<sup>1019</sup> Michael Hall, 'What do Victorian Churches Mean? Symbolism and Sacramentalism in Anglican Church Architecture, 1850-1870' in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 59, Part 1 (March 2000), pp. 78-95.

<sup>1020</sup> Hall, 'What do Victorian Churches Mean?' p. 80.

just a revival, for the Ecclesiologists, Ruskin and Pugin in their different ways, it continued to hold a powerful influence.<sup>1021</sup>

Gothic was an expensive style to execute properly.<sup>1022</sup> It had originated in twelfth century France and acquired the name Perpendicular when the architect Thomas Rickman realised that Late Gothic tracery in England resembled a grid of horizontal and verticals at perpendicular angles from each other.<sup>1023</sup> During the eighteenth century the typical patron using the style had been an aristocrat with antiquarian leanings and the means to build ornamental garden monuments or country houses, the most famous example being Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, but after 1800 Gothic attracted more attention and became more widely used, especially by the middle classes with romantic inclinations.<sup>1024</sup> By the reign of William IV and during the first twenty years of Victoria's reign, it had become part of a categorisation of styles whereby certain styles were deemed suitable for certain buildings. Thus Gothic was used for churches, Greek for museums, Italianate palazzo for banks and gentlemen's clubs and Tudor for public buildings such as workhouses.<sup>1025</sup> When Henry Darbishire was being considered as the architect for the rebuilt Unitarian Gravel Pit Chapel in Hackney in 1856, drawings for a Gothic Revival church building reveal the designs could be obtained 'off the peg' with only minor adjustments to suit the finance available, taste or liturgical preference.<sup>1026</sup> Of the seventeen drawings submitted, only one was not Gothic and as the nineteenth century progressed it became the favoured style in religious and artistic circles.<sup>1027</sup> John Ruskin championed it in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53).<sup>1028</sup> He praised

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<sup>1021</sup> Hall, 'What do Victorian Churches Mean?', pp. 80, 83.

<sup>1022</sup> Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon, 1994), p. 30.

<sup>1023</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, p. 79.

<sup>1024</sup> Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, p. 18.

<sup>1025</sup> Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, p. 30.

<sup>1026</sup> Alan Ruston 'Unitarian Gothic: Rebuilding in Hackney, 1858' in Isobel Watson ed., *Hackney History*, vol. 1 (Friends of Hackney Archives, 1995) p. 22.

<sup>1027</sup> Ruston 'Unitarian Gothic' in *Hackney History*, p. 22.

<sup>1028</sup> John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols, 1851-53 (London: Smith, Elder & Co, rep. 1874).

the style for the variety and artistic freedom it embodied, and considered it best suited to churches and cathedrals but also recommended it as one which could be scaled down to a domestic level for houses.<sup>1029</sup> For Ruskin, it also symbolised a time when the working-man and his work were valued. In *On The Nature of Gothic* (1852) he attacked contemporary society for its dehumanisation of the working classes and its superficiality.<sup>1030</sup> Gothic, with its emphasis on natural forms, could lead ultimately to God himself.

Angela Burdett Coutts's wish to commemorate her father in his old constituency was a welcome opportunity therefore to take part in an Anglican initiative that was almost fashionable for the few who could afford to undertake such ventures. It would commemorate her father's name; provide a new church and spiritual sustenance to a group of people already felt to be lacking in religious guidance; help the Church of England by aiding its church-building project, and reinforce its spiritual importance in working-class lives. The school and missionary programmes would reinforce the Church's message with practical help for the poor of the parish. All this would help the Anglican Church by reinforcing its importance in people's lives and foster a belief in the benefits of a stable society. It would also be a prestigious project for Burdett Coutts herself reflecting her personal piety and family connections. The building of memorial churches to family members by women was a socially acceptable activity for women during this time.<sup>1031</sup> Lynne Walker has argued that this was perceived as yet another extension to the domestic sphere, emphasising women's caring role and also serving to underline the idea of women as having a superior moral and spiritual nature.<sup>1032</sup> Certainly there was a long history of women's involvement in domestic building, one of the most famous being Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, built by Elizabeth Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury between 1591-97. The

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<sup>1029</sup> Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, II, p. 178.

<sup>1030</sup> Ruskin, 'On the Nature of Gothic' in *Stones of Venice*, II, p. 59.

<sup>1031</sup> Worsley, 'Henrietta Cavendish Holles', p. 148.

<sup>1032</sup> Lynne Walker, "Women Architects" in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham, eds., *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), p. 94.



architect of the Hall was ostensibly Robert Smythson (1533-1614) but there is little doubt that Hardwick had considerable input into the design.<sup>1033</sup> Women had continued to be involved in architecture during the eighteenth century where it was seen as a suitable occupation for wealthy leisured women. Although they could not formally train in architecture, women often practised in succession to their husbands and those with the financial means to do so continued to work in building design throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>1034</sup> Interestingly, Sophia Gray (1814-1871) designed and built over forty churches in South Africa as the wife of Bishop Robert Gray, Bishop of Cape Town, one of the bishoprics founded by Burdett Coutts in 1847.<sup>1035</sup>

The earliest correspondence in the archives at Westminster reveals the close relationship between Burdett Coutts and the Anglican establishment at Lambeth Palace in the building of the church from the beginning of the scheme. On January 12 1846 Blomfield wrote to Burdett Coutts:

I am happy to confirm to you that I have found a site in a poor and populous part of Westminster where a Church would be of great benefit. It is near the Tothill Fields Prison. Freehold belongs to the Dean and Chapter... but the leasehold interest might be purchased.

Church	£ 6,000
Endowment of £300	10,000
Schools	1,500
Parsonage House	1,500
Endowment for schools (50 each)	22,400

The cost of the Church if it is to have a Tower and Spire (which I think desirable) including the expense of an organ and other fittings; may perhaps somewhat exceed £6,000 but if you make up your mind as to the limit of expenditure care shall be taken not to go beyond it.<sup>1036</sup>

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<sup>1033</sup> Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick: First Lady of Chatsworth* (London: Abacus Books, 2006, rep. 2009), p. 409.

<sup>1034</sup> The R.I.B.A. was founded in 1834.

<sup>1035</sup> D. Martin, *The Bishop's Churches: The Anglican Churches of Archbishop Robert Grey* (Cape Town: Struick, 2005).

<sup>1036</sup> WCA. Burdett Coutts Loose K Papers.

Although the estimated figure for the construction of the church was six thousands pounds, the typical cost of a new church in this period was half that.<sup>1037</sup> Inevitably even these estimates were exceeded and the final cost of the church and the school - 'one of the foremost schools in London' - was in excess of £90,000.<sup>1038</sup> It is evident that Blomfield, although Bishop of London, was acting almost as one of Burdett Coutts's agents in the matter of the church's construction. In November he wrote again on financial matters:

I am very glad to learn that you approve of Mr. Ferrey's plans and that the only fault you find in them is, that they are not quite as handsome, in point of architectural ornament, as you wish them to be... Of course I directed him not to exceed, if possible, a certain sum in his estimate; and I was the more anxious on this point, in consequence of you having been called upon to lay out so much more money on the purchase of the site than was contemplated at first.<sup>1039</sup>

The design of the church incorporated a huge spire, designed so it was said so that it could be seen from Burdett Coutts's house in Piccadilly.<sup>1040</sup> It would certainly have been visible for miles around and drawn attention to Burdett Coutts's patronage.<sup>1041</sup>

The 'poor and populous' part of London to which Blomfield's letter referred was the 'Devil's Acre' situated between Dean Street and Strutton Ground. According to Charles Osborne, apart from the dangers of physical attack in this area, there were 'ever-present hazards of typhus, smallpox and other contagious diseases'.<sup>1042</sup> The streets of Westminster

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<sup>1037</sup> Dixon and Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 193.

<sup>1038</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

<sup>1039</sup> Letter dated 4 November 1846, WCA Burdett Coutts E5/1-3.

<sup>1040</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 106.

<sup>1041</sup> As early as December 1852 a hurricane caused great stress on the spire and it was decided to remove it and replace it with one of smaller dimensions. This was struck by lightning in 1885 and needed extensive repairs and was repaired again in 1919. Following bomb it was removed entirely in 1968. The present large spire consisting of polycarbonate cladding on a steel frame was erected in 1994, see *Chapters from the Life of St Stephen's*, booklet produced by St Stephen's Church.

<sup>1042</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406B.

had been notorious for many years. By the mid eighteenth century the streets were ill-paved and notoriously ill-maintained.<sup>1043</sup> The worst area included Old Pye Street, St Anne Street, and Duck Lane (now St Matthew's Street). Ironically much of the property in this area was owned by local charities that were prevented from improving the buildings by legal constraints.<sup>1044</sup>

Between 1830 and 1856 London experienced a huge programme of slum clearance and 'urban improvement'.<sup>1045</sup> New Oxford Street had cut through the rookery of St Giles, Commercial Street went through Whitechapel and Faringdon Street and Cannon Street went through the City. Prior to Burdett Coutts turning her attention to the area, parliamentary powers in 1845 provided that Victoria Street should be constructed, thus cutting its way through some of the worse of the slums. The vicar of St John's estimated that some five thousand people were thus displaced of which three-quarters left the area and the rest crowded back into all ready over-crowded hovels.<sup>1046</sup> According to a local missionary, in 1855 in one of the area's twenty four common lodging houses, the average occupancy might be one hundred and twenty people a night. Seventy two people lived in one of twelve six-roomed houses in one court, from which in three months sixty nine people were sentenced to transportation and one hanged.<sup>1047</sup> It has been estimated that street clearance accounted for the displacement of not far short of one million people between 1830 and 1880, with little provision for their rehousing.<sup>1048</sup> Displaced people were forced to stay in the same areas in order to find work which exacerbated the overcrowding.<sup>1049</sup> This re-fashioning of London was not only a means of modernising the

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<sup>1043</sup> Isobel Watson, *Westminster and Pimlico Past* (London: Historical Publications, 1995), p. 82.

<sup>1044</sup> Watson, *Westminster*, p. 82.

<sup>1045</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 167.

<sup>1046</sup> Watson, *Westminster*, p. 82.

<sup>1047</sup> Watson, *Westminster*, p. 82.

<sup>1048</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 167-170.

<sup>1049</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 170.

city but an attempt at social control as the dire living conditions and lack of social provision posed a potential threat to the respectability and stability of society, something which I shall discuss further in connection with the building of Columbia Market later in this chapter.

In 1846 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of England agreed to constitute a district of St Stephen's, Westminster, out of the existing districts of St Margaret's and St John's.<sup>1050</sup> Burdett Coutts had decided to build a church and a parsonage with a permanent endowment of three hundred pounds per annum, as well as schools and a schoolteachers' house next to the Church.<sup>1051</sup> St Stephen's was the first of Burdett Coutts's building schemes and in her choice of architect and architectural style it arguably set the pattern for the future. The architect she chose was Benjamin Ferrey (1810-1880), one of the foremost church architects of the day and a specialist in the Gothic style.<sup>1052</sup> Ferrey, a favourite architect of the Ecclesiologists, had studied in the studio of Augustus Pugin Snr alongside his more famous and influential son, A. W. N. Pugin, and had set up his own practice in 1834. Despite this closeness to the Pugin family however, he was appalled by Pugin's conversion to Catholicism and worked strictly in the Anglican tradition.<sup>1053</sup>

In October 1846 Blomfield wrote:

Mr. Ferrey is ready with his plans and will call upon you with them at Ramsgate on any day that you may appoint. His estimate for this church is higher than I had anticipated, but he tells me that he can reduce the cost by making the building somewhat less ornamental. The necessary alternative to the Meeting House and Public House, in order to convert them into schools and a parsonage of a character harmonising with the church will be £1,000. You can write to Mr. Ferrey appointing a time for meeting him and let me know, and I will inform him.<sup>1054</sup>

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<sup>1050</sup> Watson, *Westminster*, p. 82.

<sup>1051</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts Loose K Papers.

<sup>1052</sup> For an account of Ferrey's career see Basil F. L. Clarke, *Church Builders of the Nineteenth Century* (London: London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938), pp. 112, 113.

<sup>1053</sup> Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 69.

<sup>1054</sup> Letter dated 6 October 1846, WCA Burdett Coutts E5/1-3.

There is strong evidence that architects were chosen according to their faith.<sup>1055</sup> Few church architects seem to have crossed denominational barriers until the twentieth century. Although by the 1840s, Pugin's favoured 'Decorated' or 'Middle Pointed' style was beginning to be regarded as too late, too decadent and close enough to the Renaissance to have unfortunate connotations with the Reformation, St Stephen's was built in this 'Second pointed' style.<sup>1056</sup>

The Ecclesiological Movement had grown out of the Anglo-Catholic movements of the 1830s and the popularity of the work of Pugin. For Pugin, the gothic style could provide a model not just for architecture but by extension, society itself.<sup>1057</sup> *Contrasts*, and his later work of 1841, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture in England* attempted to return architecture back to a true medieval style rather than the bastardisation into which it had fallen in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries.<sup>1058</sup> Pugin considered 'pointed architecture' to be the only truly Christian style and that everything noble in architecture was only possible as a result of the one true religion, Roman Catholicism.<sup>1059</sup> For Pugin and his supporters, had England retained Catholicism 'it was possible that Birmingham and Manchester, would not have attained their present character, for merciless inhuman industry would not have been tolerated'.<sup>1060</sup> Although the majority of Roman Catholics themselves were somewhat ambivalent about the importance of gothic in church architecture, by 1834 the competition for the redesign of the Palace of Westminster set the

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<sup>1055</sup> Ruston 'Unitarian Gothic', p. 22 citing Marcus Binney in M. Binney and P. Burman, *Change and Decay: The Future of Our Churches* (Littlehampton: Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1977), p. 25. The Unitarian Darbshire did design the Anglican St James, Moore Park Road, for Burdett Coutts, presumably his long association with her overrode any denominational qualms.

<sup>1056</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 40.

<sup>1057</sup> Hill, *God's Architect*, p. 153.

<sup>1058</sup> Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, pp. 106, 107.

<sup>1059</sup> Hunt, *God's Architect*, p. 108.

<sup>1060</sup> Kenelm Digby to unnamed correspondent, n.d, 1840 WAA 137/4/26 Archives of Archdiocese of Westminster quoted in Hill, *God's Architect*, p. 174.

seal of respectability for the style.<sup>1061</sup> The Ecclesiological Society sought to apply dogmatically Pugin's ideas to Anglican Church design and Pugin's influence struck a responsive chord with all Anglicans despite his contempt for many Anglican Gothic churches.<sup>1062</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, the magazine of the Ecclesiology Society, appeared in 1846 and became one of the most important periodicals in England, remaining a forum for discussion until 1868 and setting down guidelines for the correct construction of churches.<sup>1063</sup> Between the death of William IV in 1837 and that of Prince Albert in 1861, one third of all parish churches had been restored and fifteen new churches had been built in England.<sup>1064</sup>

During the first ten years of Victoria's reign the Ecclesiologists had achieved a consistency of style form and method, stressing the importance of symbolism in the components of the church at the same time deploring 'Papist mass house' design.<sup>1065</sup> St Stephen's was singled out by the Ecclesiologists as one of the buildings worthy of emulation and Ferrey as one of the 'approved' architects capable of designing churches in accordance with the rules, principles and laws of what was regarded as an exact science.<sup>1066</sup> They insisted that all churches were to be orientated so that the priest faced east when standing before the altar and deplored those erected since the Reformation in which the orientation had been disregarded.<sup>1067</sup> It is therefore ironic that we find Burdett Coutts debating orientation for according to *The Ecclesiologist* she was no friend of the movement.<sup>1068</sup> During November 1846 Blomfield wrote to her:

I think you are rather more scrupulous than is necessary as to what is called 'the orientation.' The rule is that a Church should stand East and West where the

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<sup>1061</sup> Hall, 'What do Victorian Churches Mean? ', p. 80.

<sup>1062</sup> Pugin, *Contrasts*, p. 49.

<sup>1063</sup> Dixon and Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, p.194.

<sup>1064</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 40.

<sup>1065</sup> Yates, *Building, Faith and Worship*, p. 160.

<sup>1066</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 22.

<sup>1067</sup> Yates, *Building, Faith and Worship*, p. 161.

<sup>1068</sup> *The Ecclesiologist* (July 1850), p. 114.

round will permit it; but it is very customary to deviate from these points of the compass where that is not the case. Some of the finest churches in Rome stand North and South, St Peters included...for 'Architectural effect', the present intended position of the church will be much better than if it were built directly East and West but on this point your wishes are of course to be consulted, if you do not mind the additional expense, which I apprehend would be considerable, about the wisdom of having stained glass windows.

In fact the *Ecclesiologist* later noted with some sadness the orientation of St. Stephen's in its report of July 1850 but accepted that the deposition of the ground rendered its position unavoidable.<sup>1069</sup>

The foundation stone of the Church was laid on 21 July 1847 before the Bishop of London, the Bishops of Salisbury and Adelaide and the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey. In an illustration from *The Times* of 2 July 1847 (fig. 70) Burdett Coutts is depicted as a demure and modest young woman, head downcast, being led shyly to the foundation stone by a clergyman almost as if to the altar. In fact Burdett Coutts was thirty three and well in control of the project. This would not have suited the popular image of a respectable young lady of the upper classes, the masculine signifiers of strength and power would not have been considered suitable attributes. Burdett Coutts exercised her authority and chose the texts for the stained glass windows herself. The Bishop of London had advised her to look at the 'new church at Paddington', probably Holy Trinity, Paddington (1844-46) by Thomas Cundy II (1790-1867), and the new east window at St James's (probably St James's Church Piccadilly).<sup>1070</sup> This had been produced, reluctantly, in the modern style in 1846 by William Wailes of Newcastle: 'an artist whom I have extensively employed and recommended'.<sup>1071</sup> Although she did receive letters of enquiry from one of the foremost stained glass manufacturers of the day, William Warrington, it was Wailes (1808-81), whom Burdett

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<sup>1069</sup> Letter from Charles Blomfield to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 4 November 1846, WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-26.

<sup>1070</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-26.

<sup>1071</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-26.

Coutts finally chose to carry out the most important windows at St Stephen's (fig 71).<sup>1072</sup> Wailes had begun his glass manufacturing business in 1838 and, along with John Hardman and Co had the largest studio in England with a vast output; the 1851 census reveals that he was employing seventy one workers.<sup>1073</sup> This is corroborated by a remark in a letter from Wailes to Burdett Coutts in which he mentions that he can work very fast, having 'an extensive establishment (above seventy five)'.<sup>1074</sup> In 1841 he began producing his own glass and in 1842 began a working relationship with Pugin which was to last three years. One of Wailes' attractions for Pugin was probably cost: 'in the article of stained glass alone, since completed my arrangement with this northern man, (Wailes) a saving of 60 per cent over Willement's price has in many cases been effected'.<sup>1075</sup> Warrington was also considered for St Stephen's, but cost was to prove a factor here too as an undated letter in the Westminster City Archives from Blomfield to Burdett Coutts reveals:

I have accidentally met Henry Oakes, the friend I was mentioning as being interested in painted glass, and I find that I am right in stating that Painted glass should not exceed from 25s to 30s a square foot; this is the rate he paid to Warrington for a window at [illegible] Bury St Edmonds which cost 70 guineas – 3/- a square foot is the price fixed by the Ecclesiologist as the price for which a Painted glass window should be executed, and therefore I think taking into consideration with the fact that Warrington has painted for less per square foot than this, makes one conclude that 40/- is a very high charge, especially when I consider that there are several Windows which are to be executed; I enclose a list further enquiries for you About any of them should it be the least useful, at the same of various names of men who paint glass and I shall be very happy to make time I would remark that

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<sup>1072</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts K1/1-14. Warrington (1786-1869) was based in London and was one of the stained glass manufacturers used extensively by Pugin in the early days of his glass design. The windows in the chancel and south chancel aisle, the west window and the middle window of the south aisle. Following bomb damage during the Second World War only two of Wailes' windows are now extant.

<sup>1073</sup> Pugin used Wailes from 1842-5 but in 1845 he persuaded fellow Roman Catholic John Hardman to open up a workshop under Pugin's supervision and henceforth worked exclusively with him. Wailes' son-in-law, Thomas Rankine Strang (1835-99) became a partner in the business in 1861 and the firm of Wailes & Strang continued to operate until 1914, Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1980), p. 83.

<sup>1074</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41.

<sup>1075</sup> Letter from A. W. N. Pugin to Lord Shrewsbury dated 1 December 1841 quoted in P. Stanton, *Welby Pugin and the Gothic Revival*, Appendix VII cited in P. Atterbury, Clive Wainwright eds., *Pugin: A Gothic Passion* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 387.



either Wailes or Warrington seem to be preferred – Willement's excessive charges excluding him from being likely to be approved of. To this I have added to the names of Hardman and [illegible]. However as they are Roman Catholics I [illegible]. With regard to the others I have no present knowledge of their faith.<sup>1076</sup>

It has been suggested that Wailes's work was too dark for Pugin as he tended to use deep colours which reduced the transparency of the windows.<sup>1077</sup> Ferrey acknowledges this when he writes: 'I know Mr. Wailes's tendency to the use of yellow and I will caution him on this [illegible]. I have no doubts he will execute the glass beautifully'.<sup>1078</sup> His use of a sombre yellow rather than white was a feature which distinguished Wailes's stained glass from that used by Pugin.<sup>1079</sup> Unfortunately the windows at St Stephen's were not to find favour with *The Ecclesiologist* when they were revealed:

We are sorry to say that we can no more commend them...as successful attempts on his part to carry out Middle Pointed glass than he can praise his treatment of the earlier style at S. Barnabas. In both, the glass is thin and flat, and the drawing at once spiritless and affected. In St Stephen's he has committed the error of mixing up subjects and figures in the same light...<sup>1080</sup>

The remaining windows were the work of the firm of James Powell & Son who had patented the manufacture of stamped quarries; i.e. small, stamped out diamond shaped

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<sup>1076</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J2/1-14. It is likely that Warrington lost his contract with Pugin on the grounds of cost. Although initially cheaper than Willement he soon proved too costly and ceased to work with Pugin after 1841: 'he has become lately so conceited (and has) got nearly as expensive as Willement', letter to Lord Shrewsbury from Pugin dated 26 August 1841, quoted in Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1980) p.18. See also Binney and Burman, *Change and Decay*, p. 25.

<sup>1077</sup> Atterbury and Wainwright, *Pugin*, p. 199. Also see *The Ecclesiologist*, VI (July 1846), pp. 37, 38.

<sup>1078</sup> Letter dated 14 December 1840, WCA Burdett Coutts F2/1-2. The work of Hardman was much brighter as a result of his greater use of white. He had been manufacturing Pugin's metalwork since 1838 and from 1845 he became responsible for all his stained glass.

<sup>1079</sup> Wailes's glass is often paler than many English workshops of the same date. Certain distinctive colour combinations occur repeatedly in his windows-mauve lined with bright red, yellow lined with bright blue, red lined with acid green and there is often a great deal of pink glass.

<sup>1080</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, XI (July 1850), p. 117.

panes of glass.<sup>1081</sup> Ferrey wrote to Burdett Coutts that: 'You instruct your intention of filling the two side windows with stamped glass. I am unaware whether this alluded to the two windows in the east end of the South Aisle in which I at one time thought of having the Annunciation'.<sup>1082</sup> Stamped glass had been given qualified approval by the Ecclesiological Society but unfortunately found little favour at St Stephen's:

very poor and faded – we are aware that we are in a great degree responsible for the introduction of stamped glass. We feel it therefore a duty we owe to the truth, to own its success has not equalled our hopes... we have always protested most strongly against anything but quarries being produced by this process.<sup>1083</sup>

They also deplored his use of colour:

'We cannot allow that Mr. Powell has attained perfection. These windows, more than any other of his, show a fault which we have long felt existed in his glass, that of unnatural luminousness, the refraction incident to its mechanical production'.<sup>1084</sup>

These misgivings had been shared by Mr. Tennant in April 1850:

I was much struck today by a remark which fell from Mrs. Brown and I am led by it to observe that the windows in the Clerestory which were committed to Mr. Powell are not yet commenced and might be counter ordered, if you felt disposed to think that plain glass was preferable. The specimen window which Mr Powell has placed in the Clerestory is not very successful - and two windows lightly filled with Mr. Wailes's glass have already I think been ordered for the Clerestory by you. These will soften the light near the Chancel arch - the other windows, if you wish it to be so, might be filled with plain glass. <sup>1085</sup>

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<sup>1081</sup> James Powell, a successful London wine merchant, had bought the Whitefriars Glassworks in 1834. Although the excise was repealed in 1844, stamped quarries continued to be manufactured and were a major branch of the firm's work. Leslie Jackson, *James Powell & Sons* (London: Richard Dennis, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>1082</sup> Letter dated 4 April 1850 WCA Burdett Coutts J2/1-14.

<sup>1083</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, vol. 11 (July 1850), p. 118.

<sup>1084</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, vol. 11 (July 1850), p. 118.

<sup>1085</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41.

It is clear Burdett Coutts was not reluctant to take help and advice from anybody likely to help her as another letter, this time from the clergyman and novelist Charles Kingsley, reveals. On 17 November 1849 Kingsley wrote to apologise for the fact that he had been unable to call on her but that he had been consulting with his friends on the matter of the costs of a church organ, 'they tell me that £250 (sic) ought to purchase a first-rate organ of power, enough for a church to hold five hundred, they named Bishop as an eminent builder and reasonable his charges'.<sup>1086</sup> On 23 December 1846 Burdett Coutts wrote to the Ecclesiastical Commission for England in connection with the patronage of the church requesting that the management of the patronage should reside with her.<sup>1087</sup>

Having only one side of the correspondence it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much of the design is owed to Burdett Coutts. From the evidence we have it would seem that she was very interested in the interior of the church. Alison Ravetz has suggested that women were generally more interested in interior than exterior design.<sup>1088</sup> Arguably this may have been perhaps because it required less technical knowledge or it reflected the domain where women were expected to exercise most control. Certainly in the case of St Stephen's, most of the correspondence relates to the interior and Burdett Coutts paid close attention to the design and position of the windows, the texts and the interior fittings. Wailes praises her 'arrangement of windows for the Chancel, which I think besides the advantage of considerable variety of purpose...merit and in the selection in a judicial view will allow of great beauty'.<sup>1089</sup> Wailes would seem to have kept her closely informed on all aspects of the window design. A letter from Ferrey reveals:

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<sup>1086</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41.

<sup>1087</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41. A subsequent letter, dated 10 October 1847 consented to the patronage residing with her and referments with the Bishop of London. This gave Burdett Coutts the right to appoint clergy to the living of St Stephen's.

<sup>1088</sup> Alison Ravetz, 'A View from the Interior' in Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham, eds., *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), p. 187.

<sup>1089</sup> Letter from Wailes to Burdett Coutts dated 14 May 1850 and July 1850, WAC Burdett Coutts I5/1-41.

I have received the enclosed letter from Mr. Wailes from which you will perceive that he requests that the design for the windows may be sent to him as soon as you can spare them and most especially the design for the East window. He will secure by today's post your final order respecting the other Church window as contained in your letter.<sup>1090</sup>

A further letter on the design of the windows states:

It was always intended to place the name of each figure beneath their feet as in all old examples but will much injure the effect to introduce scrolls with texts on the heads. Texts however can with good effect and great propriety be placed [illegible] each group. These might have reference to the subject represented above or even to the figure but better if an allusion to the group.<sup>1091</sup>

On 27 December 1850 Ferrey wrote to Burdett Coutts on the matter of the ironwork, which was clearly unsatisfactory:

I have spoken to Mr. Potter on the matter, and he will take the ironwork down and fix a simple brass rod with adequate support to carry the curtains. Mr. Potter hopes to be able to introduce the ironwork into some other Church, as he had used similar kind of metal work for [illegible] in churches recently built. I hope this will meet your approval - nothing can be fairer than Mr Potter's offer. Will you kindly let me know if the substitutions of a brass railrod [?] at the N. door will do, ... the curtain and the ironwork may entirely be removed from the West door.<sup>1092</sup>

Correspondence reveals that in addition to the stained glass, details of the heating and ventilation system and the casting of the bells were sent to her for approval.<sup>1093</sup> There was

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<sup>1090</sup> Letter dated 17 January 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts, L5/1-41.

<sup>1091</sup> Dated [illegible] 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41.

<sup>1092</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41.

<sup>1093</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts F2/11 (heating and ventilation), Loose T Papers (bells).

also to be a ring of eight musical church bells which were specially cast in each bell bearing the founders name, location, year of casting and individual attributes of God as a form of prayer. Again, correspondence suggests that she was involved in every phase of their production, including visiting the foundry, as Tennant wrote on 25 March 1850: 'the bell-founder desires me to say that they trust you will defer your visit to the Foundry till after Easter'.<sup>1094</sup> Ferrey also sent a sample of one square of the carpet which he had designed himself.<sup>1095</sup>

Ferrey's irritation at Burdett Coutts's agents including Tennant, and their involvement or perhaps interference in the scheme is evident. On 15 October 1849 Ferrey wrote that Mr. Tennant had noted 'your wish regarding the Chancel Screen, I quite understand that you did not wish one across the Chancel and my observation to you in reference to the organ, applied only to the side screens'.<sup>1096</sup> By 26 December 1850, Ferrey was becoming irritated at suggestions that he was acting above his brief:

I am not aware that I ever directed anything to be placed in or about the Church without first submitting the design to you, indeed nothing could be further from my mind to do such a thing, for it would be an impertinence on my part.<sup>1097</sup>

A day later Ferrey is annoyed once more:

I am sorry for this occurrence, perhaps it will be better if Mr Tennant wishes anything that may affect the design of the building for him to communicate his wish to you through me. I was not

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<sup>1094</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23. A replica of this ring (now destroyed), was also given by Burdett Coutts to the New Westminster Cathedral, Canada.

<sup>1095</sup> See report dated 14 June 1947 in connection with proposed works and condition of church following war damage. Church Buildings Council, CARE I 23/072 St Stephen's, Rochester Row, p. 4.

<sup>1096</sup> Letter dated 15 October 1849. WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-26.

<sup>1097</sup> Letter from Benjamin Ferrey to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 26 December 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts. E5/1-3.

aware of anything.<sup>1098</sup>

The constant referral to an exacting and controlling patron must have tried Ferrey's patience. He may also have found the fact that unusually the patron was a woman an added cause of irritation. Certainly many years later Frank Lloyd Wright experienced a similar feeling of irritation by the demands of one of his patrons, Aline Barnsdall (1882-1946). Employed in 1919 to construct an 'Art Park' incorporating house, theatre and recreation space over thirty six acres Lloyd Wright commented patronisingly: 'Now the penalty (one of the many probably) for being feminine, with extremely small hands and feet, rich, alone and mundane is to have an entourage of 'dear friends'.<sup>1099</sup> One of Burdett Coutts's 'dear friends', William Tennant, was one of Burdett Coutts's 'eyes' on site. Tennant had already been appointed vicar of St Stephen's, having been senior curate at St. John's, Smith Square and come highly recommended by the Bishop of London.<sup>1100</sup> The following response to Burdett Coutts's suggested use of stained glass windows and the texts to be used, vividly recalls Jane Austen's Mr. Collins and his relationship with his benefactor Lady Catherine de Burgh, a reminder of the power of the patron especially in the context of a clerical living:

Your suggestion respecting subjects for stained glass seem to me most excellent and as respecting this fresh instance of your noble and munificent liberality like all the rest it fills me with wonder and thankfulness which I can hardly express.<sup>1101</sup>

Tennant often acted as a go-between for Burdett Coutts in her dealings with her charity works and in this case, in her communications with the architect:

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<sup>1098</sup> Letter from Benjamin Ferrey to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 27 December 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts E5/1-3.

<sup>1099</sup> Alice Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc Publishers, 1998), p. 59.

<sup>1100</sup> Rosemary Moore, 'Building the Church', *Chapters from the Life of St Stephen's*, p. 3.

<sup>1101</sup> Letter dated 12 July 1849, WCA Burdett Coutts G1/1-66.

I will communicate to him without delay your opinions respecting the proposal to decorate the chancel ceiling...Most probably he will wish to be permitted to write to you on that project...Discussion of bosses to consist chiefly of carved foliage, five of the shields in each without the colours with arms of the Dioceses of Canterbury and London, and of the Cathedral of Westminster and Chapter of Westminster arranged in a diamond with your own in the centre...It was thought that some arms in that material and position would afford a more substantial and more striking memorial of the Church and of yourself as the Founder than is afforded by the presence of your arms merely in the altar.<sup>1102</sup>

It is difficult to tell from this correspondence who considers the emphasis on Burdett Coutts as the founder needed to be reinforced, the architect or Burdett Coutts herself. Certainly Burdett Coutts left no doubt that this was a church endowed by her and sought to emphasise her connections with the Anglican establishment. This connection was further emphasised in the carvings on the capitals nearest the pulpit which contains likenesses of twelve noteworthy people connected with the church at the time including Queen Victoria and the Bishop of London (fig.72 ).<sup>1103</sup> William Banting (1797-1878), undertaker to royalty, also often acted for her in a variety of situations, here as a further pair of eyes on site: 'I have no charge to make, as I think it the duty of everyman to aid you in your great and good work by every means in his power...' <sup>1104</sup>

Obviously such a powerful person with strong opinions had to be approached tactfully as a letter from Ferrey dated 23 September 1848 reveals. Burdett Coutts was apparently unhappy '... with the idea of a polygonal formed roof for the chancel' and wished that it should be 'a open timber roof like those in the nave and aisles...' Evidently Ferrey was concerned that Burdett Coutts might wish to change this aspect of his design. As he wrote: '[I] thought I would mention the subject again to you in case you should like to reconsider the matter...' Ferrey took the opportunity to assure her that:

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<sup>1102</sup> Letter dated 29 September 1849, WCA Burdett Coutts G1/26.

<sup>1103</sup> M. Blatch, *A Guide to London Churches* (London: Constable, 1978), p. 261. The carver, P. White of Vauxhall Road, afterwards worked at the cathedrals of Wells, Rochester and Salisbury, Basil Clarke, *English Parish Churches* (London: Batsford, 1966), p. 187.

<sup>1104</sup> Letter dated 8 March 1852, WCA Burdett Coutts F1/31. William Banting (1797-1878), operated in premises close to Burdett Coutts's house in St James Street, Piccadilly.

waggon headed or polygonal shaped roofs, I can assure you ... are far more correct for chancels than any other form. They are generally divided into several compartments having – carved bosses at the juncture of the panelling, and the spaces forming the compartments are usually [?] covered a rich blue [?] ... I thought you might like to think the matter over again...<sup>1105</sup>

Burdett Coutts was reassured, and in this instance Ferrey had his way; the chancel roof (fig. 73) was polygonal of six sides, painted blue with raised gold stars, 'contrary to precedent' *The Ecclesiologist* noted.<sup>1106</sup> Ferrey was also at pains to emphasise his position and responsibilities

as architect, in the face of a patron determined to assert her will in all aspects of the church's construction. As he explained to her:

for the carved work, such as the Foliated Capitals, corbels and all description of artistical work it is usual for the Architect to select and appoint the carver for this purpose in order to ensure its being well executed. The carver is now preparing the stone for these purposes and as they look to me for payment...<sup>1107</sup>

There were ongoing problems with the heating provided by Mr. Sylvester and letters concerning this aspect of the scheme reveal the interest generated by the project amongst people ostensibly uninvolved in it, as a letter from a Richard Hooper reveals:

I hope you do not think that I took too much upon myself in calling at Stratton Street yesterday for the purpose I mentioned to Mrs. Brown. I thought it my duty to tell you how scandalously Mr. Ferrey and Mr. Sylvester are behaving to you. I look upon it as nothing less than robbery... you are far too forbearing towards Mr. Ferrey. He had already had ample opportunity,

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<sup>1105</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts F1/31.

<sup>1106</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, XI (July 1850), p. 117.

<sup>1107</sup> Letter dated 5 June 1849, WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23



and cannot complain of want of fair play. He has acted very scandalously in recommending a scheme about which he knew nothing, and then most wickedly adding expense to expense in trying to [illegible] what in his heart he knows to be a failure.<sup>1108</sup>

However, it would have been wrong of Burdett Coutts to blame Ferrey. Typically she had made every attempt to ascertain whether Sylvester and his warming apparatus were likely to succeed, in this case asking William Banting to look into the matter. He confirmed that he had spoken to a Mr. Perkins: 'a celebrated man for warming and ventilation of the Steam Gun so many years exhibited at the Adelaide Gallery...he warmed Whitehall Chapel... many other Government Buildings, Railway stations – and I myself employed him'. Banting assured her that he did not give Perkins the reasons for consulting him, but concluded that his opinion of Mr Sylvester was that 'you are quite safe in thinking of him'.<sup>1109</sup> Later correspondence reveals that Banting was probably her technical man on site, he sent Burdett Coutts detailed breakdowns of possible problems in the heating and ventilation to Sylvester and Ferrey.<sup>1110</sup> Unfortunately, the system was to have continual problems but Sylvester remained optimistic that all would be well and in submitting his account to Ferrey wrote to thank him for the 'kind and preserving support which you have given me'. He concluded by hoping that the heating system would 'prove as perfect and efficient as human means and foresight could make them'.<sup>1111</sup>

The firm of Minton & Co provided the floor tiling (fig. 74). The gothic credentials were impeccable as Minton worked extensively for Pugin, having pioneered a technique for reproducing medieval-style encaustic or inlaid tiles.<sup>1112</sup> Ferrey had suggested that a beautiful effect would be produced by using tiles with various emblems on them 'manufactured on

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<sup>1108</sup> Undated letter, WCA Burdett Coutts C11/1-4.

<sup>1109</sup> Letter dated 21 December 1851, WCA Burdett Coutts F2/1-2.

<sup>1110</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts F2/1-2.

<sup>1111</sup> Letter dated 21 December 1851, WCA Burdett Coutts F2/1-2.

<sup>1112</sup> The process had been patented by Samuel Wright of Shelton in 1830 and was perfected by Minton during five years of costly experimentation after taking an interest in the patent. Wright's process involved forming medieval-style two-colour tiles by pressing liquid clay or slip into moulded indented patterns on a base tile. It was in production by 1840, Atterbury and Wainwright, *Pugin*, p. 44.

purpose for this use' and he cited the example of Cuddesdon Palace Chapel, executed for the Bishop of Oxford.<sup>1113</sup> Again, Ferry kept Burdett Coutts fully informed of developments and sought her approval at each step. On 19 April 1850 he wrote to inform her that:

... if it will be convenient for you to be at St Stephen's Church next Tuesday it will not delay any of the work of the tiling, and I have directed the man to have a large portion of the pattern for the central passages laid out for your approval, in the mean time he will have plenty to occupy his time in laying the tiles in the small side gangway.<sup>1114</sup>

One of the aims of the Ecclesiologists was the abandonment of pew rents, a system whereby people could rent their own pews and guarantee a place for worship.<sup>1115</sup> While some felt that it encouraged attendance, it also led to the exclusion of those who could not afford to rent a pew. It was a controversial issue for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>1116</sup> Although usually some free seats were set aside, this was not always the case, and it was felt by many to be another disincentive for working-class worship. Although pew rents were only supposed to be charged in churches authorised by parliament since 1800, they were still widespread. St Stephen's was one of three new churches consecrated in June 1850 in which no seats were rented or appropriated and which were open at weekends. The first, St Barnabas, Pimlico, was consecrated on 11 June 1850, just thirteen days before St. Stephen's.<sup>1117</sup>

There was still considerable interest in such a high-profile church. In November 1850 Francis Dollman, wrote to say that:

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<sup>1113</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts F2/1-2.

<sup>1114</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts F2/1-2.

<sup>1115</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 35.

<sup>1116</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 35.

<sup>1117</sup> Nine years later St Philip's, Clerkenwell, became the first church in London with rented pews to abandon them, Inglis, *Churches*, p. 49.

I have ventured to take the liberty of mentioning that influenced by the great interest attached to the Church...it is my wish to produce a large and very elaborate engraving in lithography of the interior. Mr Ferrey with whom I have the pleasure of being personally acquainted has kindly offered every assistance by affording the access to all the drawings and documents by which perfect accuracy of illustration may be ensured. Mr. Ferrey with whom I have the pleasure of being personally acquainted has kindly offered every assistance by affording the access to all the drawings and documents by which perfect accuracy of illustration may be ensured... Should you consider the proposed engraving to deserve your kind patronage, and in particular, if I might be allowed to inscribe the view to yourself as the foundress of the Church, the honor(sic) thus conferred will be most seriously appreciated. . .<sup>1118</sup>

He may well have seen not just profits from the sale of the engravings but enhanced prestige from association with this church's construction. The church had attracted much comment in the newspapers from the beginning and strict control was exercised as to what appeared. Ferrey wrote to Burdett Coutts on 12 January 1847:

I entirely agree with you that no drawings should appear in the Illustrated papers until the plans are fully matured, I will take care... that well executed drawings shall be sent to the Periodicals mentioned. I am constantly beset by applications, but I have declined upon the grounds that the Plans are not yet entirely settled.<sup>1119</sup>

There was also royal interest. According to Ferrey in a letter to Burdett Coutts, the Queen Dowager inspected the Church.<sup>1120</sup> She alluded to it 'with great pleasure and expressed a desire to see the Drawings. I have taken the liberty of sending the plans and the [illegible – elevations ?] to Her Majesty at Beachy House'.<sup>1121</sup>

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<sup>1118</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-14. Ferrey subsequently wrote to Burdett Coutts that he was 'well acquainted with Mr. Dollman and I am sure he will make a very nice interior view of St. Stephens', WCA L5 1-14 dated 19 November 1850. In Clarke, *English Parish Churches*, p.254, there is a reference to a Francis Thomas Dollman (1812-1900), author of *Examples of Ancient Pulpits* and *Examples of Ancient Domestic Architecture* and the architect of several churches. Like Ferrey he was a pupil of the elder Pugin.

<sup>1119</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23.

<sup>1120</sup> Letter dated 20 August 1847, WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-26.

<sup>1121</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-26.

Marshal Claxton (1812-81) was commissioned by Burdett Coutts to paint *Christ Blessing Little Children* for the interior.<sup>1122</sup> He was known for his historical and biblical subjects and first came to prominence in the Cartoon competition at Westminster Hall in 1843.<sup>1123</sup> Burdett Coutts had several paintings by the artist in her collection, and on the occasion of Queen Victoria's birthday on 24 May 1854 Burdett Coutts presented her with Claxton's *A View of Sydney Harbour* which remains in the royal collection.<sup>1124</sup> Writing to the Queen, Burdett Coutts expressed her wish to present the picture to her and described the painter as almost, if not the first, artist of any talent who 'has carried his art to that distant part of the Queen's empire...' she continued, '...he assured me in his letter that the colouring is by no means exaggerated but faithfully Australian'. Burdett Coutts emphasises here the special nature and particular interest of this painting from a country on the furthest reaches of the empire.<sup>1125</sup>

On 8 July 1850 Claxton wrote from 4 Campden Hill Villas to tell her that he had finished the sketch for *Christ Blessing Little Children* and added that the subject which she suggested 'is a pleasing one'.<sup>1126</sup> He also had a small finished picture of *Prayers*, two little children kneeling in a church which he also intended to send, if allowed, for her inspection. He also explained that he wished also to inform Miss Coutts that in consequence of the 'great competition in his profession', he would be leaving England with his family to live in Sydney, Australia.<sup>1127</sup> Claxton was writing not just to inform his patron of his intentions but to ask for her aid in finding patrons in Australia, seeking in particular an introduction to

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<sup>1122</sup> The present incumbent, Philip Welsh, has confirmed that the painting is no longer in the church and its whereabouts are unknown.

<sup>1123</sup> Wood, *Victorian Painters*, p. 103.

<sup>1124</sup> Millar, *The Victorian Pictures*, p. 54.

<sup>1125</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to Queen Victoria dated 17 May 1854, Royal Archives Windsor Castle, RA/VIC/1854-1858,

<sup>1126</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23.

<sup>1127</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23. There was indeed an enormous growth in practising artists during the nineteenth century, the amount of female professional painters alone rose from 278 women recorded in the 1841 census to 1,069 in 1871, Jan Marsh, 'Art, Ambition and Sisterhood in the 1850s', in Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 35.

Anglican clergymen in Sydney.<sup>1128</sup> She evidently agreed, for on 31 July Claxton wrote to Burdett Coutts to thank her for the introduction to the Lord Bishop of Sydney. He also noted that he would, if possible, 'put the two children which Miss Coutts advises into the Picture'.<sup>1129</sup> It is not surprising that Burdett Coutts took as much interest in the contents of a painting for St Stephen's, given the care and attention for detail that she had taken with the building and content of the church itself. It is clear that she had no qualms about exercising fully her perceived right as patron to influence the content of a picture she commissioned, requesting certain elements be included in the composition. Presumably the proximity of the adjoining school had suggested the subject matter to Burdett Coutts.<sup>1130</sup>

Certain delays in the construction were inevitable. In the beginning the size of the tower led to problems, as Ferrey anxiously explained: 'formidable difficulty owing to the water which gained upon us in the deep sinking which we had to make for the tower'.<sup>1131</sup> In March 1850 a fire in the workshops of the carpenter, Mr Rigby, had destroyed all the woodwork including the seats of the church and Tennant wrote to assure Burdett Coutts that the local constabulary would be extra vigilant whilst on duty in the neighbourhood.<sup>1132</sup> As the consecration day loomed, correspondence reveals that Burdett Coutts must have been putting pressure on Ferrey to have everything ready and there were indications of increasing tension in the relationship, Burdett Coutts was evidently becoming critical of Ferrey's attention to the works. On 13 May 1850 he wrote to her that:

I can assure you that I do not neglect the due overlooking of the works at St Stephen's. I can quite understand that it appears to you as the work went on slowly, as certainly the character of the work is of a kind which does not make a

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<sup>1128</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/123.

<sup>1129</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/123.

<sup>1130</sup> Wood, *Victorian Painters*, p. 103.

<sup>1131</sup> Letter dated 12 August 1847, WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23.

<sup>1132</sup> Letters dated 17 March 1850 and June 1850. WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23.

conspicuous appearance but I do not think the work could properly go on faster. The decoration of the chancel [roof] requires time to dry before the successive colours can be put on, but this week I hope the scaffolding will be removed'.<sup>1133</sup>

Ferrey also wrote to reassure her and apologise for his absence on site: 'I had left about half an hour previously...quite at ease respecting the completion of all the works in time for the consecration on 24 June'.<sup>1134</sup> Two days later he wrote again to allay her fears respecting the chancel screen: 'The [height] of it will not exceed the back of the stalls, and the floor on the aisle side is purposely raised so that the screen may not in any way interfere with the view of those on the aisle side'.<sup>1135</sup> On 6 June the artist originally commissioned to write the Commandments on the walls was replaced, and finally in June 1850 Ferrey wrote in exasperation to Burdett Coutts:

I am much disturbed that there should have been a serious conversation respecting the seats at St. Stephen's. When you saw the model seats in Stratton Street I was not then aware of the state of forwardness in which the woodwork was - everything nearly at that time was prepared and I felt that the alterations could without any difficulty be when the seats were in the church.<sup>1136</sup>

Even after the church was consecrated, Ferrey was writing to Burdett Coutts in respect of the delays at St Stephen's confirming that he was:

vexed beyond measure at the cause which has prevented the completion of the works at Rochester Row within the time prescribed. I felt it due that in so important a scheme of ventilation Mr. Sylvester should have the necessary apparatus prepared under his own direction and I could not foretell the mishaps which have so sadly hindered the entire completion of the project as possible'.

He went on to assure Burdett Coutts of his intention to complete the project and thank her

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<sup>1133</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-16.

<sup>1134</sup> Letter dated 25 May 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-16.

<sup>1135</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-16.

<sup>1136</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23.

for her 'indulgent consideration, should she have any concerns 'I shall be very glad to... give further personal explanation'.<sup>1137</sup>

By order of the Privy Council nobody was to be buried in the Church except Burdett Coutts and Mrs. Brown, who after death were to be: 'embedded in a layer of powdered charcoal and entombed in brickwork well cemented'.<sup>1138</sup> Such a proviso probably related to the legislation regarding churchyard burials where overcrowding had led to threats to public health, culminating in the Metropolitan Burial Acts of the 1850s.

The church (fig. 75) was consecrated on 24 June 1850 before a distinguished congregation, including the Bishop of London and other dignitaries.<sup>1139</sup> On the altar was a tapestry given by the Duke of Wellington, who had seized it from the tent of Tipposahib, the Sultan of Mysore, at the storming of Seringapatam in 1789.<sup>1140</sup> The congregation would have been impressed with both the donor and the provenance of the gift as they were with the plate which was gold rather than the usual silver. As a Catherine Sinclair wrote on 24 July to Burdett Coutts: 'We both equally admired the beautiful specimens of golden sculpture on the table for certainly I never saw such elegant and graceful designs and would have been quite sufficiently amused if there had been nothing to do but examine them all'.<sup>1141</sup> It is interesting that although the church was intended to be a monument to her father it is Burdett Coutts whose effigy can be seen above the west door and whose image is perpetuated (fig. 76). She is depicted as an angel - a pun on her first name - holding a model of the church in her hands. On her left is a shield bearing the arms of her father, Sir Francis Burdett, and on the right are her own arms. The windows behind the altar also depict the arms of the Burdett family. In many ways the church, not only gothic in

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<sup>1137</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts L5/1-41.

<sup>1138</sup> Clarke, *English Parish Churches*, p. 187.

<sup>1139</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 107.

<sup>1140</sup> Now on permanent loan to the Victoria & Albert Museum.

<sup>1141</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts G4/1-16. Unfortunately the plate is no longer at St Stephen's and cannot be traced.

appearance but in its family detail recalls medieval chapels of rest in which the arms of benefactors of the church were displayed around their tombs.

The total cost of the church has been estimated at between seventy to eighty thousand pounds, most of which was met by Burdett Coutts with some contribution by the diocese of London and some donations from members of the aristocracy.<sup>1142</sup> However, the fact that only Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Burdett Coutts herself were intended to be buried there adds to the feeling that this was more of a family chapel than a public church. It was certainly Burdett Coutts's own creation from the beginning. The consecration was a memorable occasion. For the ceremony fifteen hundred people crowded into a church that had only seating for eight hundred and fifty. Afterwards some two hundred invited guests attended a gathering in the adjacent school.<sup>1143</sup> Children from the school, workmen and the poor of the parish were given a banquet in a marquee erected for the purpose in the ground of the school playground and there was also a reception in Stratton Street.<sup>1144</sup> In fact Burdett Coutts ensured that the consecration would be remembered for many years to come, as festivities continued for the next four days with services in the church every day and sermons by distinguished preachers.<sup>1145</sup> Copies of the Bible, New Testament or Prayer Book were distributed to two hundred and fifty families and the workmen were each given two shillings and sixpence in celebration. The parsonage was not finished, however, until July 1851 owing to continuing problems with the heating system. Ferrey considered Tennant deeply prejudiced against the system and thought 'that if he was so unhappy with the system he should seek the remedy himself'.<sup>1146</sup>

The Church received a mixed reception. The reaction of *The Ecclesiologist* has been noted

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<sup>1142</sup> Moore in *Chapters from the Life of St Stephen's*, p. 6.

<sup>1143</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 107.

<sup>1144</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 107.

<sup>1145</sup> *The Builder* (6 July 1850).

<sup>1146</sup> Letter dated July 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts J1/1-23.



already. *The Builder* stated that the building was of 'very considerable beauty', though it suggested that the lambs at the foot of the font should be removed or improved.<sup>1147</sup> It made no comment on the stained glass though it felt that the stamped quarries were 'very effective'.<sup>1148</sup> The carving by White was judged to be 'exceedingly well done' but it considered the exterior to be 'unworthy of the purpose'.<sup>1149</sup> The critic dryly concluded that: 'the church affords seats for eighty hundred and fifty persons and has cost a very large sum of money', a hint of disapproval at what many may have felt was an ostentatious display of personal patronage by a very wealthy person and perhaps also at a young woman drawing attention to herself in such a high profile project.<sup>1150</sup>

It is interesting to compare St Stephen's with the other London church which Burdett Coutts endowed, St James, Moore Park Road, Fulham, London. This church was built considerably faster than St Stephen's, the Foundation Stone having been laid on 20 June 1867 and the consecration taking place on 19 December that same year, Burdett Coutts having originally donated an 'iron room' to the parish in 1865.<sup>1151</sup> The architect in this instance was Henry Darbishire but the church was designed on a much smaller scale. The site was donated, but the building itself cost £4,118, the builders being Cubitt and Company.<sup>1152</sup> The church was brick built with a slate roof, and in 1874 an apse was added to the design of the evangelical architect Ewan Christian (1814-1895).<sup>1153</sup> The costs were kept low by extensive use of wood, a comparatively inexpensive material at this time,

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<sup>1147</sup> *The Builder* (6 July 1850).

<sup>1148</sup> *The Builder* (6 July 1850).

<sup>1149</sup> *The Builder* (6 July 1850).

<sup>1150</sup> *The Builder* (6 July 1850).

<sup>1151</sup> This is likely to be a structure of corrugated iron. Simple churches or chapels were sometimes constructed from this medium in poor areas when the costs of erecting a more permanent structure could not be met.

<sup>1152</sup> Report for the Council for Places of Worship on St James, Fulham, Moore Park Road, London, referred under the Pastoral Measure, 1968, Council for Church Building.

<sup>1153</sup> Christian's practice was largely devoted to church restoration and the building of new churches, schools and parsonages. Dora Ware, *A Short Dictionary of British Architects* (London: George Allen, 1967).

especially above the low capitals of the nave which gave the building its only striking feature when it was surveyed in 1975.<sup>1154</sup> The nave was originally decorated with stencilled patterns of scrolls, dots and crosses but, as with St Stephen's, at some stage these were subsequently varnished over.<sup>1155</sup> The report compiled on the church in 1975 spoke of the village-hall like feeling which the extensive use of wood gave to the building, a 'wooden skeleton' which contrived to give a greater feeling of space to the interior.<sup>1156</sup> Unfortunately the inside was also very dark and the walls had been painted white in an effort to overcome this, presumably in a similar fashion to St Stephen's. The colouring of the stained glass, by W. M. Pepper of Euston Road, London was 'flaking badly' and the figures were 'poor', although the canopies were of 'a character which might almost be mistaken for fifteenth-century work'.<sup>1157</sup> The report concluded that St. James was of 'little significance either of itself or in the townscape' and that it should be declared redundant.<sup>1158</sup>

It would seem that Burdett Coutts did not feel the same enthusiasm for her church in Fulham as she did for the Westminster Church. There was not the emphasis on her patronage as is evidenced in St Stephen's, the family coat of arms or the bust of Burdett Coutts above the door. A building of simpler design and less prestige in a less central location, it also cost much less. It seems strange that Darbshire did not undertake the later additions to it, but presumably he was busy elsewhere. That Westminster had family connections and St Stephen's was built as a memorial to her father would also account for the care and attention placed upon it. Charles Osborne records that for nearly fifty years Burdett Coutts paid all expenses of St Stephen's Church and many parochial organisations associated with it.<sup>1159</sup>

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<sup>1154</sup> C.C.B. Report, St James Moore Park Road.

<sup>1155</sup> C.C.B. Report, St James Moore Park Road.

<sup>1156</sup> C.C.B. Report, St James Moore Park Road.

<sup>1157</sup> C.C.B. Report, St James Moore Park Road.

<sup>1158</sup> The Church was largely demolished in 1980 and the remainder subsequently converted into flats.

<sup>1159</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A

In addition to St Stephen's, Westminster, and St James, Fulham, Burdett Coutts built St Stephen's, Carlisle, in 1864, since demolished. In his biographical notes Charles Osborne mentions that 'three other London churches were built by her assistance'.<sup>1160</sup> Apart from St James, Fulham these were St John's Deptford and St James Hatcham, both in south east London.<sup>1161</sup> I have been unable to discover any further information as to what form of assistance this was and can only assume it was financial but to what extent is unknown.

As a staunch Anglican the building of St Stephen's brought into focus many aspects of Burdett Coutts's religious beliefs. At a time when reordering and positioning of churches was at the forefront of church design, failure to place communion furniture correctly would have been extremely controversial.<sup>1162</sup> As *The Ecclesiologist* admitted in its review of St Stephen's, Burdett Coutts was not a particular devotee of their ideas but she was quick to defend any attempts to undermine what she perceived as the correct liturgy of the Church of England.<sup>1163</sup> Mr. Tennant had been quick to bring to Burdett Coutts's attention a potential source of much embarrassment in July 1850:

All the stained glass windows are now in their places and are exceedingly beautiful' he wrote but 'one alteration I think is desirable in the group representing the Annunciation in one of the small windows on the south side, [where] the Angel holds a scroll bearing the text 'Ave Maria, gratia plena'. This text besides being in Latin is taken from the Roman Catholic Vulgate. Mr. Wailes must have adopted it inadvertently thro' the haste in which he had to execute his work. It will be very easy for him to substitute for this the words of our Bible "Hail thou that are highly favoured".

Ruefully, he had noticed that Lord Shrewsbury had 'looked with much satisfaction at the

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<sup>1160</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46406A.

<sup>1161</sup> Charles Osborne, ed., *Letters from Charles Dickens To The Baroness Burdett Coutts* (London: John Murray, 1931), p. 3.

<sup>1162</sup> Brooks and Saint, *The Victorian Church*, p. 7. See also Hall, 'What do Victorian Churches Mean?' pp. 85, 86.

<sup>1163</sup> *The Ecclesiologist*, vol.11, (July 1850), p. 117.

Latin words'.<sup>1164</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Angela Burdett Coutts should have felt very strongly at any breaches in Anglican tradition in such matters as the positioning of the

Communion Table at St Stephen's. Following a visit to the church in 1871, she was shocked to see dangerously un-reformed practices going on and wrote as follows:

My Lord Bishop, However painful I may find it to be, as founder and maintainer of this Church and School I feel in some large measure responsible for what passes in them...but my protest is not as such but as a member of a reformed Church...I protest against our ... Communion Tables being presented to our eyes decorated and set out in a manner suitable to and consistent with the forms of another Church...which is not the Church for which we in England suffered so much in struggles which gained for us all that religious and natural freedom we enjoy. . .I understand nothing of ecclesiastical Law... but I do... protest against our Communion Table being set as it is...I wish you clearly to understand I have had no hand or been consulted on the Church arrangements and it is impossible for me to feel otherwise than deeply hurt at the whole style being so much at variance with my own feelings.

Burdett Coutts also complained of the conduct of the clergyman in his Communion Service, not only was she: 'surprised to find the chancel lighted in midsummer', but she observed: 'to my surprise... the Clergyman held the cup up. One is generally too much absorbed to notice the actions of others during Communion but it struck me as a very singular and unnecessary action'.<sup>1165</sup> Burdett Coutts concern would have been exacerbated in in that it was her in own church in which these controversial actions were taking place. As she put it: 'I beg truly to offer and record my protest. The pressure on me is great to protest against which I have seen as adverse to the spirituality and intention of that reformed Church of which I am a member'.<sup>1166</sup> The spirituality of the church was at the

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<sup>1164</sup> Letter dated 30 July 1850, WCA Burdett Coutts J2/1-14. Lord Shrewsbury was one of the highest profile Roman Catholics in Britain and the foremost patron of Pugin who most notably built St Giles, Cheadle (1841-6) for him, Pugin's most elaborate and expensive commission. He would naturally have been delighted at such a slip in such a high profile building.

<sup>1165</sup> Memorandum dated 24 June 1874 from Angela Burdett Coutts to the Bishop of London, WCA Burdett Coutts C11/1-5.

<sup>1166</sup> WCA Burdett Coutts C11/1-5.

forefront of Burdett Coutts's involvement in one of the biggest Anglican crises of the Victorian period.

Angela Burdett Coutts had endowed the Bishopric of Natal in 1853 and John Colenso was consecrated as Bishop.<sup>1167</sup> Already a controversial figure, he began to question the veracity of the Old Testament and towards the end of 1862 he brought out a book of biblical criticism which prompted the Bishop of Cape Town, Robert Gray to bring Colenso's teaching to a formal trial.<sup>1168</sup> Believing that the Letters Patent from the Queen empowered him to institute proceedings against South African Bishops, he tried Colenso for heresy and deposed him of the bishopric. Colenso appealed to the English Courts and in March 1865 the Privy Counsel reversed the judgment. Colenso returned to South Africa, was excommunicated, but resumed his services in the cathedral.<sup>1169</sup> Burdett Coutts had endowed the bishopric on the firm understanding that she was helping to set up branches of the Church of England in the colonies and they were to be firmly anchored to the Anglican Church at home.<sup>1170</sup> She decided that unless the Privy Council's decision could be reversed and original arrangements to Her Majesty's Patent honoured she would request her money back. She determined to use every means in her possession to have the decision reversed but it with no success. The Bishop of London eventually presented a petition to the Queen on Burdett Coutts's behalf asking the queen to exercise her royal supremacy in the appointment of bishops to remove Colenso.<sup>1171</sup> A letter to Burdett Coutts from a disgruntled clergyman can be found in the City of Westminster archives:

I am utterly astonished that you should have so little feeling and regard for the honour or truth of a sovereign of your own sex as to side with those who have presumed to injure both by day, to set aside Letters Patent which had been

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<sup>1167</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 187.

<sup>1168</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 187.

<sup>1169</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 188.

<sup>1170</sup> Burdett Coutts endowed the bishoprics of Cape Town (1847), Adelaide (1847) and British Columbia (1858).

<sup>1171</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, pp. 191, 192.

issued as much as a dozen years and twenty years in her name. No precedent for such an outrageous proceeding...<sup>1172</sup>

Colenso sued for his salary and in November 1866 Lord Romilly, Master of the Rolls, ruled that 'Colenso was Bishop of Natal and would remain so until he died or resigned or was legally removed'.<sup>1173</sup> The Trustees had to pay Colenso and lawyers advised Burdett Coutts that her endowment of seventeen and a half thousand pounds could not be reclaimed because it had been paid to the Colonial Bishopric Fund and had to be regarded as such.<sup>1174</sup> Another Bishop of Natal was appointed in 1869 and there continued to be two bishops until Colenso's death later that year. Seeing her own bishopric pulled into controversy to which she seemed to have no powers was anathema to Burdett Coutts. Loath to admit defeat, she tried again in 1876 after the death of Bishop Gray.<sup>1175</sup> She wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts asking them to use their influence to appoint a new bishop.<sup>1176</sup> A meeting was suggested but she declined saying that her views were well known and therefore a meeting would be pointless.<sup>1177</sup> The disappointments and impotence of her position continued to rankle and in her will she made her feelings well known. She declared her endowments had not been made to a 'Community as a spiritual body or as an independent voluntary association but the Protestant Church as now by law established under the supremacy of the Crown, being Protestant'.<sup>1178</sup> If the Church of England became disestablished or separated itself from the State, she wished her endowment to revert to her estate, the money to be used 'to promote the principles of the Protestant reformation, civil liberty, and social well-being'.<sup>1179</sup>

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<sup>1172</sup> Letter from Thom. Manlyn to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 1865, WCA Burdett Coutts E5/1-3.

<sup>1173</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 192.

<sup>1174</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 192.

<sup>1175</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 192.

<sup>1176</sup> Letter from Angela Burdett Coutts to the Rev. W. T. Bullock, dated 21 November 1872, Lambeth Burdett Coutts Papers 1383 fo. 96.

<sup>1177</sup> Lambeth Burdett Coutts Papers fo. 206.

<sup>1178</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 193.

<sup>1179</sup> Will of the Rt. Hon. Angela Georgina Burdett Coutts dated 8 August 1888.

St Stephen's Church has changed considerably since its commemoration in 1850. The first impression of the interior is of an attractive light-filled building. It is certainly much brighter than when it was first built as most of the stained glass windows has gone. A small chapel to the Chancel, the Tennant Chapel, was constructed in 1904 and close by is a window attributed to Edward Burne-Jones. As part of a reappraisal following the bomb damage of its buildings, an report was carried out on the church in 1947.<sup>1180</sup> The author of the report, church architect S. E. Dykes Bower (1903-1994), made various recommendations including the lengthening of the altar to correspond to the width of the five lights of the east window which was duly carried out. His mission would seem to have been a modernising one and as a result he made the following somewhat contentious statement:

The Baroness Burdett Coutts with all her emphasis on active christianship, certainly did not intend that her munificence of a hundred years ago should be regarded as a personal memorial or that her gifts should be regarded as museum pieces; and therefore never to be altered or relegated to meet changing contemporary needs.<sup>1181</sup>

As a result, the biggest change which the church has undergone has been the adoption of Dykes Bowers' suggestion that the interior should be covered over in a cream lime wash as was introduced in the Reformation.<sup>1182</sup> *The Builder* of 6 July 1851 had remarked on the walls as being decorated with texts. On the nave for example, the words: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men' were inscribed, 'curiously written as to diaper the whole wall'. Contemporary engravings show this design on the arch (fig.77). Since then Benjamin Ferrey's carpet in the chancel which was still extant in 1947 has now gone but the Gothic Revival Bishop's chair by 'Mr Morant of bow-street' (sic), is still in

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<sup>1180</sup> Report by S. E. Dykes Bower, 1947, CARE. St Stephen's, Westminster File, CP2/230.

<sup>1181</sup> CARE CP2/230.

<sup>1182</sup> CARE CP2/230.

situ.<sup>1183</sup> New railings have been placed outside the church in accordance with Ferrey's original ideas, and a new garden created with a sculpture carved from stone from the original spire.

Whatever Dykes Bower would have liked to believe, Burdett Coutts may not have regarded her church as a museum piece but it was certainly a means of perpetuating not only her father's but even more so her own name in the same way as a medieval memorial chapel. She spared no expense on its construction and it was intended to be the location of her own tomb and those closest to her. Visible for miles around courtesy of its enormous spire, she stamped her authority around the church itself by emphasising her name and aristocratic forbears in prominent positions. Signifiers of class status have been incorporated into architectural details around the building: it is Burdett Coutts's statue, not her father's, which lies above the entrance to the church and her coat of arms and that of the Burdett family which are prominently displayed in the windows behind the most important part of the church, the altar (fig. 78). In addition Burdett Coutts had the heads of important contemporary figures carved around the top of one of the pillars to emphasise her links with the Anglican establishment and royalty. There would have been little doubt of the importance of the person whose munificence had built this church and to whom the congregation owed the provision of the adjacent school.

Angela Burdett Coutts's other building projects were very different. They were not so demonstrative of patronage as St. Stephen's and had a more overtly philanthropic basis, either to provide housing or to transform the food supply for the poor of the East End. The housing development at Columbia Market was an innovative project, aimed at the 'deserving poor'; the small scale housing on her own estate at Holly Village was a more personal project where cost constraints played less of a role and her love of detail could be seen in a more domestic setting. Columbia Market was her biggest building project on a massive scale and ultimately her biggest failure. As with St Stephen's Church, all these projects reveal Burdett Coutts's love of detail and ornamentation. They were products of her own vision and simultaneously projections of her own elite status and authority in

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<sup>1183</sup> *The Builder* (6 July 1850).



different social spheres.

St Stephen's Church was conceived ostensibly as a memorial to Angela Burdett Coutts's father and catered for the spiritual needs of the Anglican poor in Westminster. Although a visible testament to her own family status and authority, it was also part of a larger Church initiative. Burdett Coutts's most lasting and successful contribution to social welfare however, lay in the housing scheme which she undertook in the 1860s in the East End of London.

### Patron of Domestic Architecture

An artisan, who with his wife and two children have (sic) had typhus fever; his wife is dead; two fingers of the man's hand have been poisoned, and he cannot do any work at present. In another place an aged woman, deformed, gets her living by needlework; she earns 4d a day. A mother and two sons, husband dead, have all had typhus fever; landlord has taken their bed for rent. A poor man's wife 'confined' in a cold cellar... From Bethnal green [sic] comes the usual weekly report of death from Pestilential rooms, fever close to ill-drained water stands, short water supply, and those other evil conditions to which we have often directed attention.<sup>1184</sup>

In January 1865 an article appeared in *The Builder* which set out a picture of some of the living conditions endured by a large number of the population of London.<sup>1185</sup> Founded in 1842 by J. A. Harrison, *The Builder* was a weekly magazine for the construction industry and under its editor George Godwin (1813-1888) it adopted a campaigning stance on important social issues.<sup>1186</sup> The article deplored the poor conditions in which many of the working classes lived in London, and gave an example of a garret housing a family at the top of a large house containing only one window of five panes of glass, the whole measuring forty eight inches wide by nine inches high, of which only two of the panes could be opened. The room experienced the full heat of the sun in summer and the heat of fires used for

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<sup>1184</sup> 'The Condition of London Question', *The Builder* (7 January 1865).

<sup>1185</sup> *The Builder* (7 January 1865).

<sup>1186</sup> *George Godwin and 'The Builder'*, London Metropolitan Archives Information Leaflet No. 22, February 1997.

cooking. The article concluded that poverty and poor conditions were contributing to vice and crime: 'To educate is better than to punish, prevention is better than cure. The neglected children of the streets should be made the property of the State'.<sup>1187</sup> Such articles were not new; the appalling housing situation and resultant threat to public health from poor living conditions had been known for over twenty years but such an article was as apposite in 1865 as it would have been in 1845. The populations of the major cities and especially London had grown enormously during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>1188</sup> As people poured into already overcrowded dwellings the poor living conditions had led to a series of cholera outbreaks in the 1830s.<sup>1189</sup> These had focussed public attention on the problems of urban overcrowding, and the growth of an Evangelical Conscience had led to a gradual change of public opinion in the country.<sup>1190</sup>

It was commonly believed that infectious diseases were spread by miasmas arising from foul cesspits and evil smelling streams.<sup>1191</sup> In 1836 a national network of Poor Law Boards of Guardians was established which was obliged to register births, marriages and deaths.<sup>1192</sup> These were analysed by the first Secretary of the Poor Law Commission, Edwin Chadwick, and these enabled him to arrive at conclusions based about the state of the nation's health.<sup>1193</sup> Two major official reports, of the Select Committee on the Health of Towns in 1840, and the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns in 1845 confirmed what Edwin Chadwick and his colleagues had already noted; both recommended single public health authorities in each area to reorganise cleansing, paving, drainage and water supply, and made recommendations for improvements.<sup>1194</sup> These included the building of tenement

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<sup>1187</sup> *The Builder* (7 January 1865).

<sup>1188</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 149.

<sup>1189</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 149.

<sup>1190</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 149.

<sup>1191</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 149.

<sup>1192</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 149.

<sup>1193</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 130.

<sup>1194</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 150.

blocks to house the poor in a hygienic, decent and convenient way. Endless debates then ensued as to how the poor were to be housed. Following on from a cholera epidemic which had just killed fifty four thousand people, the Public Health Act of 1848 was passed. Although unpopular, this Act was followed by the Housing Act of Lord Shaftesbury in 1851. By the time of the 1851 census over half the population was now classed as urban and

from 1821 to 1851 over four million people moved to towns. Between 1801 and 1901 the population of England and Wales grew from 8.9 to 32.5 million.<sup>1195</sup>

The Evangelical Conscience recognised that higher standards of housing would give a sense of dignity back to the Labouring Classes.<sup>1196</sup> A number of philanthropic housing societies responded to the situation, most notably the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes founded in 1841 and the Society for Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Classes (S.I.C.L.C), founded in 1844, and whose supporters included Lord Ashley (later the Earl of Shaftesbury) and Prince Albert.<sup>1197</sup> The latter aimed to provide dwellings for poor families so 'contrived as to unite comfort with economy' and to improve dwellings using 'Christian Principles'.<sup>1198</sup> One of the main causes of the overcrowding was the need for the poor to be near town centres and work where rents were high. Men needed to be on the spot for possible work at five or six am; women sought work as charwomen, seamstresses and sweated domestic labour, which accounted for a substantial amount of female employment, the type of jobs not available in the suburbs.<sup>1199</sup> Cheaper markets meant that food was cheaper in the town centre and debts to local shopkeepers also often meant that the poor were locked into certain areas where they

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<sup>1195</sup> Michael S. Gibson and Michael J. Langstaff, *An Introduction to Urban Renewal* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. 19.

<sup>1196</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 150.

<sup>1197</sup> John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 19.

<sup>1198</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 155.

<sup>1199</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 149.

were known and could obtain credit.<sup>1200</sup>

Arguably the biggest problem facing the philanthropic societies was the availability of land near town centres where prices were high. Early attempts to provide philanthropic housing in these areas meant that densities were high so that rents could be kept low. After a few experimental schemes in the mid 1840s a block of 'Model Houses for Families' was erected in Streatham Street Bloomsbury in 1849-50.<sup>1201</sup> The architect of this influential design was Henry Roberts, an Evangelical who had previously specialised in country houses for Evangelical members of the aristocracy and some churches and schools.<sup>1202</sup> In 1851 a scheme for Model Houses for Families was erected at the Great Exhibition and won the highest award there.<sup>1203</sup> It was one of the earliest attempts to bring the latest concepts of advanced housing for the working classes before as wide a public as possible, and Robert's model lodge provided housing for four families and was extremely influential.<sup>1204</sup> Its central feature was an open staircase and the style was 'Jacobethan' but the construction allowed for infinite repetition of the terraces and tenements, so that housing of several storeys might be constructed.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, urban house rents in England and Wales continued to rise with London experiencing the greatest increases.<sup>1205</sup> An index shows a rise from 100 points in 1845 to 185 in 1910, with particularly high increases in the mid 1860s, 1870s and turn of the twentieth century.<sup>1206</sup> Wages tended to remain static although food prices fell; when wages did increase in a poor area they were often absorbed

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<sup>1200</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 148.

<sup>1201</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 159.

<sup>1202</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 150.

<sup>1203</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 159.

<sup>1204</sup> Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 159.

<sup>1205</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 148.

<sup>1206</sup> H. W. Singer 'An Index of Urban Land Rents and House Rents in England and Wales 1845-1913' in *Econometrica*, Vol. 9 (1941) Table 5 p. 230 quoted in Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 148.

in higher rents. The pressure on housing led to abuses of the system and as a result sub-letting was common, also rack renting, when the 'fag-ends' of leases were re-let. Middlemen known as 'house jobbers', 'farmers' or 'traders' were under a fixed obligation to the ground landlord and made their own profit by overcrowding and charging exorbitant rents. Houses were broken up for sub-letting. Families who had previously occupied two rooms were forced by threat of eviction into one thereby increasing the income of the house.<sup>1207</sup> The early housing societies began by building and converting lodging houses and constructing model self-contained flats, but these proved unattractive for commercial investment and the numbers actually housed were negligible.<sup>1208</sup> Lord Ashley reported 'comparative inertness and inactivity' as early as 1852.<sup>1209</sup> The return on S.I.C.L.C properties dropped from four per cent in 1852 to little more than two per cent in 1859.<sup>1210</sup> A combination of poor economic conditions and the gradual decline in cholera epidemics had led to a decrease in activity. In 1857 an economic depression set in which led to virtual collapse of philanthropic housing schemes within three years. However, social housing was to be galvanised by the foundation of the Peabody Donation Fund in 1862, the gift of George Peabody, a wealthy American merchant banker who now lived in London.<sup>1211</sup> Peabody has become synonymous with philanthropic housing and the little-known architect who designed all of its early estates was Henry Astley Darbishire (1825-1899), an architect closely connected with Burdett Coutts.

Born in Manchester, on 8 September 1825, Darbishire was baptised there in the

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<sup>1207</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 173.

<sup>1208</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 173.

<sup>1209</sup> Lord Ashley quoted in *The Labourer's Friend* (July 1853) p.97 in J. N. Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund: The Role of a Housing Society in the Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 10, I (September 1966), fn, p.9.

<sup>1210</sup> H. Roberts, '*The Importance of the Dwellings of the Labouring Classes*' (1859), quoted in Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund', p. 9.

<sup>1211</sup> The Trust was set up with an initial capital of £150,000 expressly 'to ameliorate the condition and augment the comforts of the poor, who, either by birth or established residence, form a recognised portion of the population of London'. George Peabody to the Trustees, 12 March 1861, quoted in Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund', p. 7.

Presbyterian/Unitarian Cross Street Chapel. It is likely that his father was a trustee of the chapel and one of the most well-known Unitarian families in the City. Arguably as a result of his Unitarian connections, Darbshire was chosen as the architect of the new Unitarian chapel in Hackney, east London in 1856.<sup>1212</sup> He later moved to London where his offices were at 4 Trafalgar Square and from his will we know that he died at Edenbridge, Kent in 1899, leaving a wife, Eliza, two sons and a daughter. Judging by the contents of his

will he would appear to have been financially very successful.<sup>1213</sup> He is chiefly known today for his work for Angela Burdett Coutts and the Peabody Trust although he also designed social housing for others including a Mr. Gibbs, 'a wealthy merchant in the City'.<sup>1214</sup> In a Sessional Paper to the R.I.B.A in 1867 Darbshire revealed something of the background to his employment with Burdett Coutts.<sup>1215</sup> According to Darbshire, the Columbia Square buildings were erected after an experiment made by a Committee of the Officers of the Brigade of Guards in 1853-54, who built some dwellings for married soldiers just before the Crimean War.<sup>1216</sup> Darbshire was a personal friend of several members of the Committee and he had undertaken to 'keep the work going' during the absence of the Committee in the Crimea. The dwellings consisted mainly of tenements of two and three rooms, let at two and three shillings respectively per week. The building fund had been raised by debentures and Burdett Coutts had taken several. This interest had inspired her to consider that civilians would also benefit from such a scheme and the first block at Columbia Square had been built as a consequence. When that was finished 'it was visited by a great many persons, including the most experienced philanthropists of London and different parts of the

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<sup>1212</sup> Ruston, 'Unitarian Gothic', p. 22.

<sup>1213</sup> Under a will dated 8 March 1878 Darbshire left £22,000 to his elder son, Frederick and £15,000 each to his other two children. Despite his pioneering work there was no obituary in *The Times*.

<sup>1214</sup> Probably Rochester Buildings erected by William Gibbs, '*Discussion on Professor Kerr's Paper 'Working Men's Cottage'*' (20 November 1863) given to the Architectural Association.

<sup>1215</sup> 'On the Problem of Providing Dwellings to the Poor', R.I.B.A. Proceedings, First Series 1866-7, O.G.M, R.I.B.A. (14 January 1867), pp.167-169.

<sup>1216</sup> R.I.B.A. Proceedings 1866-67 (14 January 1867), p. 167.

country and from the continent, and when their judgement was satisfactory to Miss Coutts, she proceeded with the other buildings which she has since had erected'.<sup>1217</sup>

Darbishire was conscious of the reputation of his patrons and was at great pains to protect them for Burdett Coutts seems to have been liable to accusations of indiscriminate use of her wealth in her philanthropic scheme.<sup>1218</sup> He was very concerned when architect Professor Robert Kerr (1823-1904), who had initiated the debate on the problem of providing dwellings for the poor, seemed to imply that neither Burdett Coutts nor Peabody were very careful over the distribution of 'large funds' which they had placed at his disposal: 'when Mr. Peabody lays down his hundreds of thousands, and Miss Coutts and others display almost equal profusion in their liberality, they take no responsibility upon themselves as to the mode in which the money is to be laid out'.<sup>1219</sup> Darbishire took great pains to write to the secretaries of the R.I.B.A. Ordinary General Meeting pointing out that he very much resented the implication that these patrons were careless of their wealth. Darbishire reminded them that 'Professor Kerr could not know the very great trouble and great anxiety which they both had taken before a single brick was laid of the buildings which they had founded'.<sup>1220</sup>

Bethnal Green had been a focus of philanthropic attention for some years and it was this area that Angela Burdett Coutts chose as a suitable location for her 'model dwellings for the poor'.<sup>1221</sup> The collapse of the Spitalfields and Bethnal Green silk industry at the end of the

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<sup>1217</sup> R.I.B.A. Proceedings 1866-67 (14 January 1867), p. 167.

<sup>1218</sup> R.I.B.A. Proceedings 1866-67 (14 January 1867), p. 167.

<sup>1219</sup> Dictionary of Scottish Architects [www.scottisharchitects.org/biography](http://www.scottisharchitects.org/biography) accessed 20 August.2011. R.I.B.A. proceedings, 24 January 1867, p. 66.

<sup>1220</sup> Darbishire wrote several times on this matter, denying that he ever apologised to Kerr for any misunderstanding and criticises the report of the discussion paper. He was particularly annoyed by the use of the word 'large' to describe the funds at his disposal and found any such adjective to be very damaging at a time when the building projects of both Burdett Coutts and Peabody were just being finished and criticised

<sup>1221</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 119.

1820s had led to the social decline of this part of the East End.<sup>1222</sup> As a result it was often the special focus of outside help from such bodies as the Church of England and from private philanthropy. In the 1840s Victoria Park was laid out as a state provided public amenity. Designed by James Pennethorne, a pupil of Nash, it was meant to be an eastern Regents Park and to attract a wealthier resident to the East End that would lead to an improvement in the character of the area. Unconvinced, the wealthier middle classes failed to react with any enthusiasm and the scheme remained unfinished.<sup>1223</sup> The Anglican Church specifically targeted the area as part of its church building programme and built ten new churches in Bethnal Green alone.<sup>1224</sup> Unfortunately the project proved a failure. There were too many small churches and parishes, its clergy lived in impecunious isolation outside their middle-class church-going milieu and the quality of the clergy attracted to the area tended to be low.<sup>1225</sup> Engels had visited and written about the area in his *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844) and *The Builder* eloquently described it in the issue of 25 April 1857:

The house property about this quarter is in ruinous condition. The dwellings of the poor are low and mean, and the general character of the buildings as structures are of the 'Jerry' type. If the rent can be screwed out of the tenants around here, the landlord ought to be thankful. These wretched tenements have been doctored to death, and they are now bursting asunder in sheer rottenness...

Charles Dickens had already opened Angela Burdett Coutts's eyes to the conditions of the poor during the Urania Cottage project. In 1853 they had tried to set up a 'model house' in Westminster, a kind of 'show house' in which landlords could see how to improve their property 'for the greater happiness and health of their tenants and their own peace of mind'.<sup>1226</sup> The landlords failed to be impressed however, and Burdett Coutts's appeal to

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<sup>1222</sup> Brooks and Saint, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 35.

<sup>1223</sup> Millicent Rose, *The East End of London* (London: Cresset Press, 1951), p. 236.

<sup>1224</sup> Brooks and Saint, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 35.

<sup>1225</sup> Brooks and Saint, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 35.

<sup>1226</sup> Letter from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett Coutts dated 1 February 1853 quoted in Johnson, *Letters*, p. 222.



install sanitary facilities also failed, even when she promised to meet any costs that exceeded a modest estimate.<sup>1227</sup> She now resolved to rebuild an area in the East End. The particular site chosen, Nova Scotia Gardens (fig. 79), was one of the worst centres of sickness and fever in the East End and had been the site of a notorious murder by body snatchers in 1831.<sup>1228</sup> In 1852 Burdett Coutts bought the site but, unfortunately, Nova Scotia Gardens was also the site of a huge dust mound, fifty or sixty feet high (fig. 80), such as the one famously described in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. *The Builder* described it:

At the time of our visit, the summit of the mountain was thronged with various figures which were seen in relief against the sky, and boys and girls were amusing themselves running down and toiling up the least precipitous side of it...the district surgeon who chanced to come in the way of one of our assistants said that in the summer he is constantly called to attend cases of typhus fever on each sides of this refuse. To add to the mischief there is nothing else but surface drainage and cesspools,...the white cottages throw all the waste water in front of the houses, as the small drain is constantly choked, and the closets are often overflowing.<sup>1229</sup>

The dust collector who owned the site applied to the courts for time to find an alternative place of business and was allowed the maximum period of seven years. This caused a severe delay and work did not actually begin until 1859.<sup>1230</sup>

Dickens insisted she visit model dwellings in Calthorpe Street, Bloomsbury and consulted Dr. Southwood Smith, a leading authority on Public Health, who knew the area.<sup>1231</sup>

Dickens also brought in his brother-in-law, Henry Austin, an architect and sanitary engineer, to advise on the early stages. Initially Burdett Coutts proposed to employ Philip

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<sup>1227</sup> Johnson, *Letters*, note to p. 273.

<sup>1228</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 154.

<sup>1229</sup> *The Builder*, (25 April 1857).

<sup>1230</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 155.

<sup>1231</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 119.

Hardwick as architect.<sup>1232</sup> Wellington had employed him and she had used him previously when making improvements to Coutts & Co. Unfortunately he arrived at their meeting without plans, failed to impress Dickens and as a consequence was replaced by Henry Darbishire. Most developers did not think it economically worthwhile to commission an architect for low-cost dwellings and they were only used by philanthropic or semi-philanthropic housing societies. Even one of London's largest housing agencies, Sidney Waterlow's Improved Dwelling Company, boasted that the expense of an architect was unnecessary.<sup>1233</sup> Angela Burdett Coutts's private scheme was not the first such venture but it was certainly one of the first. In London a Mr. Harton had built a small block of dwellings for eighteen families in 1850 in New Street Mews, Dorset Square, and there was another in Grosvenor Mews in 1852 to the design of Henry Roberts.<sup>1234</sup> In Lambeth the Duchy of Cornwall built its own block of tenements in 1855 incorporating shops on the ground floor with accommodation in the basement.<sup>1235</sup>

In April 1852 Burdett Coutts sent Dickens a draft plan. Dickens advocated flats which would also be able to provide gas, water, drainage, and 'a variety of other humanising things which you can't give them so well in little houses'.<sup>1236</sup> Having experienced the effects of sub-letting, Dickens also advised on the necessity of inserting a clause in the lease prohibiting this.<sup>1237</sup> Burdett Coutts was to incorporate all these points in the construction of her housing and these elements were followed by Darbishire in his subsequent work for her. Henry Darbishire outlined his own principles for 'construction of dwellings for the poor' when addressing the Architectural Association in 1863.<sup>1238</sup> Darbishire stated that his

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<sup>1232</sup> Probably Philip Charles Hardwick (1820-1890), son of Philip Hardwick, architect (1792-1870). He took over his father's practice in 1847, Dixon and Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 260.

<sup>1233</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p.25.

<sup>1234</sup> J. N. Tarn, *Five Percent Philanthropy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 30.

<sup>1235</sup> Tarn, *Five Percent Philanthropy*, p. 30.

<sup>1236</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 155.

<sup>1237</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 121.

<sup>1238</sup> *Building News* ( 27 November 1863).

dwellingings were intended as town dwellingings for working men earning between twelve and fourteen shillings a week. He considered that this class was particularly ill-served and subject to the barest accommodation necessary to render social life tolerably decent. He suggested that new designs were too unfamiliar and therefore unpopular despite the obvious improvements to accommodation. The working man who had previously lived in one room with his family resented being placed in a bigger property that he could not afford to furnish or keep clean. He thus proposed that a poor mans town dwelling should consist of a living room and bed room with a provision for additional bedroom when required; that it should possess a plentiful and accessible supply of water, both for ablutions and cooking, a water-closet, sink, and lavatory distinct, but not far removed from his tenement; a washroom with the means of drying clothes in any weather without artificial heat; and lastly where practicable, a playground for his children. He advocated rooms of a regular shape as being more easily kept clean and less expensive to furnish. He was also sensitive to the needs of the tenants in other ways. In describing the design of the laundry Darbshire remarks on the need for slate partitions to preserve the privacy of the washer, 'the ragged conditions of the clothes, which some of the poor women bring to be washed, being such as would excite remark and ridicule were they not concealed from general observation'.<sup>1239</sup> Darbshire had also noted the readiness of the women to use the washing facilities: 'Every bit of rag she can find, must be washed; not half-washed, but washed in every stage of washing – soaped, rinsed, and boiled over and over again until there is more wash left than rag'.<sup>1240</sup>

Despite the poor living conditions there was initial opposition to the proposed housing scheme from local people and Darbshire apparently had to calm the situation, a scene recounted by a 'Fellow Worker' in condescending tones in *The Builder*:

the natives had become aware that their offensive playground was about to be

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<sup>1239</sup> Report of paper by H. A. Darbshire entitled 'Dwellings for the Poor', given to the Architectural Association reported in *Building News* (20 November 1867), p. 867.

<sup>1240</sup> Darbshire, *Building News* (20 November 1867), p. 867.

taken from them...at all events each hillock had its mountain of opposition... As there was no fight, the architect delivered his 'mountain speech' and my friend was all attention until its close when he was pleased to signify his approval of its sentiments.<sup>1241</sup>

Although extremely cost-conscious, Darbshire was firmly of the opinion that there was little point in skimping on construction in an effort to cut costs as this tended to backfire later.<sup>1242</sup> Darbshire cited an example of a poorly built row of cottages in Bethnal Green, which Burdett Coutts had tried to purchase, in which the exterior walls were only nine inches thick.<sup>1243</sup> This terrace was in a very poor condition, the floors were bad, the drainage poor and roof dilapidated. Despite carrying out repairs they had eventually to be demolished, having only been constructed two or three years previously.<sup>1244</sup> The partition walls at Columbia Square were accordingly four and a half inches thick which had increased the cost of the buildings but rendered repairs less necessary. Darbshire had offered to look after the repairs for Burdett Coutts until someone could be appointed and he had advised the Superintendent to carry out all repairs directly, but nothing substantial had been needed.<sup>1245</sup> The design consisted of four blocks, five storeys high, each containing forty five apartments with a communal corridor running the entire length of the block on each floor with flats leading off it on either side. The blocks formed a square (fig. 81) around a large Gothic clock tower on whose side was an inscription on which Angela Burdett Coutts had her name inscribed. Clock towers were to become a standard feature in market hall design as a means of emphasising authority and as a prominent central feature in the design, used in a similar way in this housing development all eyes would have been drawn to the name

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<sup>1241</sup> *The Builder* (24 October 1857).

<sup>1242</sup> In this he was right, Rothschild Buildings which were constructed at the instigation of Charlotte de Rothschild to provide housing for Jewish workers in the East End, had been constructed at a low cost and as a result suffered continual maintenance problems in later years, Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement, 1887-1920* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 22.

<sup>1243</sup> *Building News* (20 November 1863).

<sup>1244</sup> *Building News* (20 November 1863).

<sup>1245</sup> *Building News* (20 November 1863).

of Burdett Coutts as founder.<sup>1246</sup> Outside on the main street was a drinking fountain in Portland Stone and granite. Beatriz Colomina has discussed the concept of the houses as a viewing mechanism which precedes and frames its occupant.<sup>1247</sup> The eye is directed towards the interior, it 'turns its back on the outside world.'<sup>1248</sup> The use of a tower and a fountain incorporating features which were increasingly used in public spaces during the nineteenth century, could also in this instance be said to add to the insularity of the buildings, a private world within a public one behind the high forbidding walls of Columbia Square dwellings (fig. 82), built to keep the evils and temptations of the city out.

The brick was of two colours, grayish-yellow for walls, blueish-gray for arched windows. The rooms were not self-contained, to discourage sub-letting, and lavatories and washing facilities were shared.<sup>1249</sup> The attic floor was used either for laundries or covered areas for drying clothes and for children's play on wet days.<sup>1250</sup> The library or reading room was a feature also utilised by Octavia Hill and reflected the belief that education could elevate the working man's leisure habits, another aspect of social control.<sup>1251</sup> It may also be a reflection of Burdett Coutts's nostalgic view of the use of the library in the manor house which she described in her introduction to *Women's Mission*.<sup>1252</sup> Although there were single rooms the majority of dwellings were family sets of two rooms, a living room containing cooking facilities, measuring 12' x 10' and a bedroom 12' x 8' in which the whole family slept.<sup>1253</sup> Each floor had two washrooms, one for men and one for women, and the facility of hand-

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<sup>1246</sup> James Schmiechen and Kenneth Garb, *The British Market Hall: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 77.

<sup>1247</sup> Beatriz Colomina 'The Split Wall: Romantic Voyeurism. Examination of the Works of Adolf Loos', in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), p. 83.

<sup>1248</sup> Colomina, *Sexuality and Space*, p. 85.

<sup>1249</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 121.

<sup>1250</sup> On fine days children could use the outside area within the buildings.

<sup>1251</sup> Maltz, *British Aestheticism*, p. 4

<sup>1252</sup> Burdett Coutts, *Women's Mission*, p. 42.

<sup>1253</sup> *Building News* (20 November 1863).

basins, sinks, baths and w.c.s.<sup>1254</sup> Gas and water were supplied and a resident superintendent and two porters kept the corridors and staircases clean. At the end of each corridor was a large chute for rubbish. Rents were between two shillings and sixpence and five shillings a week. This contrasts with Henry Roberts's influential design for the first block of Model Houses for Families in Streatham Street, Bloomsbury (fig 83) which consisted of a block four storeys high of brick and stucco with some minimal classical decoration.<sup>1255</sup> These flats were self-contained and arranged around three sides of a courtyard that allowed air and light into the rear of the building. Access here was by open brick galleries intended to allow each family the privacy of its own front door while at the same time separating the flats to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. The interior of the flat consisted of a living room,

one or two bedrooms, kitchen and own wc. Rents were between two and four shillings per week, five pounds and ten pounds eight shillings per annum.<sup>1256</sup>

Darbishire was strongly opposed to sub-letting. In a discussion following the delivery of his paper *Dwellings for the Poor*, to the Architectural Association in 1863, Darbishire had related that he had visited the buildings built by Alderman Waterlow and found them finely papered and of good character, though small (fig. 84).<sup>1257</sup> He was very pleased with them. He had enquired of an old lady, who was a tenant, how much she paid and was told that the rental was six shillings per week for two rooms (this contrasted with three shillings and sixpence for two rooms at Columbia Square). In order to pay this the old lady accordingly took a lodger and shared a bed.<sup>1258</sup> These flats were pitched not at the 'undeserving poor'

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<sup>1254</sup> Octavia Hill told the Parliamentary Committee on Housing in 1884 'if you have water on every floor that is quite sufficient for working people' quoted in Rose, *The East End*, p. 264.

<sup>1255</sup> Dixon and Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 72.

<sup>1256</sup> Dixon and Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 72.

<sup>1257</sup> *The Building News* (20 November 1863)

<sup>1258</sup> 'On Working Men's Cottages' report on a paper by Henry Darbishire to the Architectural Association, reported in *Building News* (20 November 1863).

but those with a regular income, or who would normally expect to have a regular income from their trade. In fact none of the philanthropic housing schemes of the day were designed for the poorest.<sup>1259</sup> A report in the *Daily News* in 1864 on the Spitalfields development by the Peabody Trust reveals that the incomes of the residents were similar.<sup>1260</sup> This ranged from between sixteen and thirty shillings a week among occupants working as charwomen, shoemakers, clerks, policemen and firemen. The trustees were anxious to deter the more troublesome elements and the rents - comparable to the Columbia Market scheme - were considered a deterrent.<sup>1261</sup> Neither the Columbia dwellings nor the Peabody estate took the plight of the single widow or widower into account.<sup>1262</sup> The subletting prohibition rendered the flats beyond their reach as they could not afford the rent without it, in the case of Peabody certainly, rents were paid in advance and a reference was required from an employer which was impossible for the casual labourer.<sup>1263</sup> Indeed rent was collected assiduously and failure to pay one weeks rental resulted in eviction just as in Burdett Coutts's schemes. It was vital that the tenants were in a position to pay the weekly rents or else their tenancies would be forfeit.<sup>1264</sup>

In a Sessional Paper to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1875, Darbishire, by then an experienced architect of housing for the working classes, again gave his thoughts on the building of such dwellings.<sup>1265</sup> He had revised some of his earlier thoughts on design. He now regretted the provision of baths: 'their cost, and the expense of their maintenance through the carelessness and extravagance of the tenants, rendered it necessary to reduce their number. It was also found that they were but seldom used, except in very hot weather,

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<sup>1259</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 184.

<sup>1260</sup> Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund', fn, p. 11.

<sup>1261</sup> Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund', p. 11.

<sup>1262</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 184.

<sup>1263</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 184.

<sup>1264</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 184.

<sup>1265</sup> R.I.B.A. Sessional Paper (13 December 1875), p. 46.

and then, chiefly by young men and boys, who made playthings of the fittings'.<sup>1266</sup> To Darbshire's credit, he re-emphasized that the working class was not one large amorphous body but made up of many elements, each with different needs, to a large extent determined by their wages.<sup>1267</sup> In 1863 he had specified that: 'the site for a block of associated dwellings should be as open, and in a situation as public, as possible, not only to secure the advantages of light and ventilation but because it is desirable that it should be easily accessible and easily found and that the residents may have frequent opportunity of contact with neighbours whose habits and appearance are superior to their own'.<sup>1268</sup> By 1875 he was asserting that the various sections should not be mixed up with each other nor should different classes of accommodation be provided in the same building:

Experiments have been made with this view, and opportunities have been given to the lower sections to associate more frequently with the upper, in the expectation that their manners and habits would become softened and improved under better influence. Shops have been provided as part of the buildings in thoroughfares where they are most likely to answer; work rooms have been added to the tenements of those engaged on piece work at home; reading rooms and libraries have been supplied and furnished for the use of the better educated... but none of these have been answered. <sup>1269</sup>

He attributes the failure to class prejudice amongst the poor, the unwillingness of the better-off to mix with their 'social inferiors' and to the poorer workers' unwillingness or pride preventing them from happily having their shortcomings exposed to the glare of the better off.<sup>1270</sup> One can sense the exasperation in Darbshire's words and his despair of these attitudes. As one of his chief aims when planning a block of flats was to oblige the poor to improve the standards of sanitation the apparent indifference of the poor to his efforts was

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<sup>1266</sup> R.I.B.A. 1875, p. 46.

<sup>1267</sup> R.I.B.A. 1875, p. 46.

<sup>1268</sup> *Building News* ( 20 November 1863).

<sup>1269</sup> R.I.B.A., 1875, p. 46.

<sup>1270</sup> R.I.B.A., 1875, p. 46.



particularly annoying:

The working man hates fresh air at home; the elements seem to affect him but little while he is at work and his blood is warm with exercise but when his labour is over and rest allows his body to cool, he feels chilly and uncomfortable, he complains of discomfort in his dwellings, he stops up every niche and crevice in which thinks a breath might enter, breath might enter and hugs himself at last in the clouds of smoke which his sulky fire pours forth in consequence. Experience has shown how vain it is to attempt any misguided device to save him from suffocation; however clever it may be, he finds it out, and render it useless; and unless the air, which must find its way in when doors and windows are opened from sheer necessity, is as free from stagnation and impurity as possible, the interior of the very best arranged dwelling must be healthy and offensive.<sup>1271</sup>

It is hard not to sympathize with the inhabitants of Columbia Square when one discovers that in his efforts to prevent miasmas, Darbishire installed permanently open windows at both ends of the corridors, positioned doors and windows in the flats so as to produce maximum draughts and used doors 'that do not fit too close'.<sup>1272</sup> Similarly, to reduce the risk of infestation there was no plaster on the walls nor wallpaper, just stock bricks coated with two coats of well-sized distemper. One of the reasons why the buildings were demolished in the 1960s as being unfit for human habitation was the high incidence of pneumonia amongst children in the buildings.<sup>1273</sup>

There are clear attempts at restricting tenant's behaviour and habits in both the Peabody and Columbia schemes. Tenants were forbidden to paper the walls, 'offensive' occupations were forbidden including washing other people's clothes for payment - a common occupation for the widow - and in the Peabody Buildings no washing was allowed to be hung up to dry in the flats, no dogs were allowed, tenants were encouraged to be in bed by

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<sup>1271</sup> R.I.B.A., 1875, p. 46.

<sup>1272</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 156.

<sup>1273</sup> Darbishire explained in his paper of 20 November 1863 that the veto against papering prevented vermin infestation which was virtually impossible to eradicate and was cheaper as incoming tenants often objected to the 'half-dirty paper of a previous occupant'.

11pm and no children were allowed to play in the corridors or on the stairs.<sup>1274</sup> While the buildings are not there to punish, social housing was certainly used as a method of social control. Octavia Hill saw her housing as a means to 'reform' the attitudes of her tenants.<sup>1275</sup> She hoped that by 'raising the people' she might also raise their expectations, instilling a longing for more 'refined pleasures', or as Diana Maltz puts it, where she found offence she 'claimed control'.<sup>1276</sup> Her lady rent collectors were there to inspire change by their conduct. They were also there to gain information about the tenants, to observe just as a prison warden would observe, calling upon the tenants twice a week and using the visits as a means of entering the houses for observation purposes.<sup>1277</sup> Hill believed such close contact with the tenants was an essential part of her work - 'there is much of rebuke and repression needed'.<sup>1278</sup> Michel Foucault has discussed the role of the prison and its assumption of responsibility for all aspects of the individual, his aptitude for work, everyday day conduct, morals and state of mind.<sup>1279</sup> In the light of this it is tempting to view the architecture of such model housing as something akin to nineteenth-century prison design. Using Bentham's panopticon model as a design tool for knowledge of the inmate, the model dwellings took on a similar role as a tool for the moral education of the poor - 'surveillance and observation, security and knowledge, individualisation and totalisation, isolation and transparency'.<sup>1280</sup> The construction of tenement flats aided this panopticon-like vision with their emphasis on observation in their long corridors and watchful lady rent collectors. Darbishire who had designed the dwellings with the view that the occupants would not be in residence for very long, leaves us in no doubt that although her methods and housing

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<sup>1274</sup> Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 184.

<sup>1275</sup> Ruth Livesey, 'Space, Class and Gender in East London 1870-1900' in Attfield and Kirkham, *A View from the Interior*, p. 90.

<sup>1276</sup> Maltz, *British Aestheticism*, pp. 29, 44.

<sup>1277</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 235.

<sup>1278</sup> Octavia Hill 'Homes for the London Poor', 1875, p. 3, quoted in White, *Rothschild Buildings*, p. 54.

<sup>1279</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 235.

<sup>1280</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 207.

construction were not the same as Hill's, Burdett Coutts also saw her housing as a form of behavioural education and control of the poor, as Darbishire noted:

The working man is a Nomad, as much so as the Arab of the desert, the nature of his employment compels him to wander from place to place like an unquiet spirit. He cannot be regarded ...as a permanent tenant and as the improvement of habits and taste is one of the objects most desired by those who undertake to improve his home, is important that, when he first takes possession of it, should find it clean and fit for immediate use.<sup>1281</sup>

Even at the time criticism of 'too bare walls' as affording a 'prison-like and comfortless aspect' was made and countered by Darbishire: 'A visit to some of the dwellings in London would, I think, remove this impression, for it would prove that a look of cheeriness and comfort would be obtained even in those tenements where the walls are uncovered by engravings and coloured prints'.<sup>1282</sup>

Although Darbishire's designs for the Burdett Coutts schemes were all Gothic in style, as was his first project for the Peabody Trust in the East End of London, his later designs were broadly Italianate and drew criticism even then for their bleak prison-like appearance (fig. 85).<sup>1283</sup> Darbishire seems only willing to consider change for financial reasons unless compelled to do so. The cost of his buildings was very reasonable and he had a well-worked out formula for arriving at the correct amount of building for a given site.<sup>1284</sup> His formula consisted of equating the cost of the land and the cost per square foot for building with desirable rent and the fixed return necessary to keep the fund solvent; it was this equation which rendered the building so visibly unattractive. The forbidding exterior might also be said to further discourage the outside world from entering the dwellings and corrupting the inhabitants inside. In 1863 the *Building News* reported on the fortnightly meeting of the Architectural Association. It stated that: 'Miss Burdett Coutts had some cottages built in

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<sup>1281</sup> *Building News* (23 November 1863).

<sup>1282</sup> *Building News* (23 November 1863).

<sup>1283</sup> Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund', p. 14.

<sup>1284</sup> Tarn, *Working Class Housing in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1971), p. 13.

Columbia Square. He [Darbshire] had tried to make them pay and had therefore designed them very plain. Miss Coutts had said however that they were so very plain that she would not like to live in them herself and therefore would have them ornamented. He had therefore reintroduced gables'.<sup>1285</sup> The result was a profit of two and a half per cent. This was far below the normally expected five per cent return and at this meeting Darbshire took pleasure in reporting that he was to design some cottages for Mr. Gibbs in Westminster 'which should produce five per cent...in nine months he hoped to speak more favourably of their percentage than of Miss Burdett Coutts's'.<sup>1286</sup>

It is worth noting that although Burdett Coutts's motives for her social housing were varied, she did not seek to perpetuate her name in the same way as the Peabody Trust and smaller housing trusts - Rothschild Buildings, Waterlow Buildings - by giving her dwellings her name. This may be a contributory factor in the neglect of Burdett Coutts as a pioneer in social housing. It must also be noted that, as was suggested at the time, some considered that she was throwing her enormous wealth at a project in an ill-thought out manner, especially as her dwellings did not need to render a profit to their patron as others did. I would argue that these factors may have significantly contributed to her dismissal as a serious contributor to the history of social housing. I would also suggest that the fact that she did not share the close association with her tenants in the same way as Octavia Hill also contributed to her work in this field being dismissed as having something of the 'Lady Bountiful' about it.

If Burdett Coutts's social housing scheme was characterised by its forbidding architecture, then her private housing project was an opportunity to create dwellings which fulfilled her love of detail without the constraints of public architecture.

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<sup>1285</sup> *Building News* (20 November 1863).

<sup>1286</sup> Unfortunately they were rated for fifty people and this adversely affected their profitability. Darbshire had appealed to Lord Stanley and was hoping that parliament would look into the matter, *Building News* (20 November 1863).

## Holly Village

Burdett Coutts felt a great attachment to her out-of-town estate, Holly Lodge. Following the gift of Columbia Market, discussed later in this chapter, to the Corporation of London, the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, had felt that some form of public recognition was in order and offered her a peerage. Burdett Coutts had hesitated, taking two days to accept it (her father had declined such an honour several times), but finally accepted.<sup>1287</sup> The possible reasons for her acceptance have been discussed earlier but her public letter of acceptance reveals something of her romantic nature: 'The Couttses (sic) are one of the gypsy families of the lowlands of Scotland, and I suppose the wandering instincts of my tribe had prevented my attaching myself to the soil and I have only pitched a tree here and there'.<sup>1288</sup> She also stressed her long aristocratic lineage 'I could connect myself [to]... Ancoats in which the first Burdett founded a priory. He was that excellent and wise soldier to whom I am under such infinite obligations who came from Normandy with the Conqueror'.<sup>1289</sup> Once accepted Burdett Coutts relished the title, henceforth she was known as 'the Baroness'.

Burdett Coutts had inherited Holly Lodge from her step-grandmother Harriot following the death of the Duke of St. Albans in 1849. The house, designed by George Smart, stood on what is now numbers 2 and 3 Holly Lodge Gardens.<sup>1290</sup> Originally it only consisted of thirteen acres of land to the south of the lodge but by 1922 this had risen to sixty acres.<sup>1291</sup> The premises seemed to have been used primarily for entertaining in the summer months and as venues for prestigious outdoor events. In 1867 she staged an enormous fete for

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<sup>1287</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 178.

<sup>1288</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 212.

<sup>1289</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 212.

<sup>1290</sup> John Richardson, *Highgate: Its History Since the Fifteenth Century* (London: Historical Publications, 1983), p. 58.

<sup>1291</sup> Heal Archive A.IV 100.

Belgian volunteers with a central marquee seating twelve hundred people (fig. 86).<sup>1292</sup> The *Illustrated London News* for 2 July 1867 described the event and reported that it had been originally intended to provide a reception for six hundred foreign visitors but Burdett Coutts was then told a few weeks later that the actual number would be a thousand. The number was then doubled.<sup>1293</sup> The reception gave her the opportunity to entertain on a sumptuous scale and the chief guest was an old friend and customer of Coutts & Co, King Leopold of the Belgians. A Belgian visitor recorded the event: 'Oh the beef and the lamb, and salmon and the lobsters, the baskets of fruit, the creams and the jellies...six hundred waiters... and then the cider, the ale and the wine'.<sup>1294</sup> He observed that Holly Lodge was 'a modest villa. A Belgian banker would have painted the shutters and the walls'.<sup>1295</sup> As has been noted before, Holly Lodge seems to have reflected the more relaxed, or bourgeois aspect of Burdett Coutts, where it was the grounds that were on display rather the house itself; she had the more impressive town house in Piccadilly for that aspect of public display and class identification.

In 1881 she hosted another prestigious garden party for the Ninth International Medical Congress, 'arguably the greatest and most historic medical congress ever'.<sup>1296</sup> The congress lasted one week under the patronage of Queen Victoria, and was a landmark in the acceptance of the new science of bacteriology in medicine, surgery and public health.<sup>1297</sup> Burdett Coutts commissioned a painting (fig. 87, Wellcome Trust) to commemorate the event, great care having been taken to paint the numerous portraits which render the faces slightly awkward, obviously it was hoped that the guests would wish to buy commemorative engravings to record their presence. Burdett Coutts and Ashmead are in the centre of the

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<sup>1292</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 172.

<sup>1293</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 172.

<sup>1294</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 172.

<sup>1295</sup> Bertram, trans. Edna Healey, *Les Belges a Londres* (Ghant, 1867), cited in Healey, *Coutts*, p. 320.

<sup>1296</sup> Alex Sakula, M.D, 'The Jubilee Medical Congress, London 1881', *Medical History* (1982), p. 183.

<sup>1297</sup> Sakula, 'The Jubilee Medical Congress', p. 183.

frame, standing on a red carpet greeting their guests. The male guests are dressed in formal dark attire of frock coats and top hats so that the few women in attendance stand out in bright summer colours. Burdett Coutts, in pale blue, stares out directly at the spectator, there is no attempt to make her engage with the figures around her as her husband, standing at her side, does. In a sea of muted colours our eyes are drawn to her and she meets our gaze; we are left in no doubt to her importance at the centre of this event.

By the time of the proposed sale of the Estate in 1907 the house consisted of an office, billiard room, conservatory, kitchen, dormitories over stabling, coach house, yards, dairy, lodge, carriage entrances, walled garden and paddock with another lodge on the other side of Highgate West Hill.<sup>1298</sup> The grounds had meadows, orchards, forcing beds, hothouses and a vinery. In the sales catalogue the house is described as having five bedrooms on the top floor and four main bedrooms on the first along with fig and grape houses. Burdett Coutts had added to the estate during her occupation. She acquired South Grove House in 1857 and 78-79 Highgate West Hill in 1856, possibly to protect the northern boundary of the estate.<sup>1299</sup> The small development of houses which she built on the edge of her estate, Holly Village, was Burdett Coutts's own attempt at a cottage orné, a concept which had grown in popularity since the early nineteenth century.<sup>1300</sup> Following the publication in 1785 of John Plaw's *Rural Architecture*, consisting of designs from the simple cottage to the decorative villa; the first British architectural villa book to place designs in a picturesque landscape.<sup>1301</sup> Blaise Hamlet near Bristol built between 1810 and 1811 was a notable example (fig. 88). Built by John Harford, a Quaker banker, to a design by John Nash, the village became something of a place of pilgrimage for lovers of the picturesque.<sup>1302</sup> It consisted of a number of almshouses arranged around an open village green space.

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<sup>1298</sup> Richardson, *Highgate*, p. 54.

<sup>1299</sup> Sold by the Coutts Estate in 1934 to a property developer who demolished it and built flats there. This led to such an outcry that Highgate's first preservation society was formed as a result, Richardson, p. 55.

<sup>1300</sup> J. Morley, *Regency Design* (London: Zwemmer, 1993), p. 213.

<sup>1301</sup> Morley, *Regency Design*, p. 213.

<sup>1302</sup> Morley, *Regency Design*, p. 214.

Although not gothic in design this arrangement is very similar to that employed by Darbishire at Holly Village (fig. 89).<sup>1303</sup>

The choice of gothic for Holly Village is significant, it exhibited a taste for the style that she and other philanthropic builders had used for social housing but here in a much smaller context. In her choice of English Gothic Burdett Coutts was perhaps seeking to emphasise the harmony which was deemed to be embodied in 'authentic' or 'good style' such as gothic on a domestic scale. The use of 'true materials' such as wood and red brick came to the fore here and again Burdett Coutts used the best material and craftsmen.<sup>1304</sup> Gothic was also used by the Halifax worsted manufacturer Edward Akroyd who built some worker's houses at Copley (1845-53) and model villages at Akroydon (begun 1859).<sup>1305</sup> He initially employed George Gilbert Scott, one of the foremost exponents of the Gothic Revival style, as architect, and subsequently William Henry Crossland.<sup>1306</sup> Akroyd explained that he had chosen the domestic gothic style because it was the original style of the parish of Halifax and because this 'taste of our forefathers pleases the fancy, strengthens the house and home attachments and enhances the present with memories of the past'.<sup>1307</sup> This emotional and sentimental view of gothic would have also appealed to Burdett Coutts and in J. C. Loudon's enormously influential *Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* we find an intellectual justification for the gothic that combines sentimentality, patriotism and religion:

In no style is unity of form and system so easily given and maintained; and in Britain especially, none is better calculated for producing emotion, for the reason before stated, viz. that almost everyone who has been in the habit of frequenting a country church is familiar with its details. The superiority of this style over Grecian, Roman or Italian styles was well known

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<sup>1303</sup> In order to maintain this village feel, residents of Holly Village are forbidden to erect fences or other barriers around their property, Christopher McIntosh, 'A Victorian Fantasy in Highgate', *Country Life* (5 December 1968).

<sup>1304</sup> Muthesius, 'Periodisation', p. 279.

<sup>1305</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 177.

<sup>1306</sup> Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 177.

<sup>1307</sup> E. Akroyd, *On Improved Dwellings for the Working Classes*, 1861 p.8 quoted in Burnett, *A Social History*, p. 177.



to everyone at all acquainted with principles of construction... it is now acknowledged that the ancients knew little of the science of construction and precepts of Vitruvius and Pliny were considered imperfect or erroneous. There is more construction skill shown in Salisbury and others of our cathedrals than in all the works of the ancients put together.<sup>1308</sup>

As has been previously noted, by the mid century, gothic had become identified with a sense of 'Englishness'.<sup>1309</sup> Burdett Coutts was apparently intensely patriotic with 'a profound belief in the destiny of the British race, the British Empire and the ingrained Protestantism of the English people'.<sup>1310</sup> It is probable that she would have been attracted to the style for these patriotic reasons as it was reflected in the Anglican Church with its emphasis on the 'simple truths of scripture'.<sup>1311</sup> According to Charles Osborne she had a deep belief in the close connection between Church and State and considered the State the best guarantee for maintenance of the Church of England as re-established in the sixteenth century. She believed however, that it was English people who would preserve this 'priceless heritage' rather than the bishops of the established Church.<sup>1312</sup>

It is not known what prompted Burdett Coutts to build Holly Village. Rural landowners had a tradition of relocating and rebuilding communities for aesthetic and or economic purposes.<sup>1313</sup> A country house and estate was a defining aspect of the ruling class.<sup>1314</sup> The reshaping of land and living accommodation was a long held means of perpetuation and endorsing of hegemony and privilege.<sup>1315</sup> Both country estate owners and industrial

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<sup>1308</sup> J. C. Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1846), pp. 112-113.

<sup>1309</sup> Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia*, p. 112.

<sup>1310</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A

<sup>1311</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A

<sup>1312</sup> Burdett Coutts BL 46405A.

<sup>1313</sup> Arnold, *Rural Urbanism*, p. 21.

<sup>1314</sup> Girouard, 'The Power House', in Jackson Stops, *The Treasure Houses*, p. 23.

<sup>1315</sup> Arnold, *Rural Urbanism*, p. 56.

manufacturers took the opportunity to create 'model dwellings' for their employees, and it is often stated that Holly Village was designed for either estate servants or employees of Coutts & Co, but there is no evidence to support this view. Darbshire himself said that they were designed 'to form picturesque and ornamental features from various points in the grounds; and perhaps also to serve the wants of clerks and others in receipt of limited incomes, whom little has been done to provide comfortable dwellings'.<sup>1316</sup> He goes on to say that they were erected with a view 'to the decoration of the margin of Miss Coutts's pleasure-grounds, and at the same time of providing cottage accommodation of a superior description'.<sup>1317</sup> Significantly Burdett Coutts decorated her grounds not with picturesque ruins nor classical forms as had proved popular in the past but with new housing in the gothic style. In 1867 the *Christian Times* stated that the Village had been designed for 'Miss Coutts own work people... subsequently abandoned and now occupied by a higher class'.<sup>1318</sup> By the time of the census in 1871 out of eleven occupied houses, four gave their profession as head of household as 'clerk', one a 'collector', one wire worker, one merchant, a salesman and also 'other means'.<sup>1319</sup> Certainly Burdett Coutts did house servants on her estate, in 11 Holly Terrace, which she kept under her own control. Her oldest servant, Joseph Snow, died there in 1895. The interview in the *Strand Magazine* indicates that workers continued to work on the estate for many years after which they might normally have retired: 'Many are really past actual work but there they stay until such time as the Baroness pension them off'.<sup>1320</sup> In this paternal practice Burdett Coutts was following in a long established aristocratic tradition of 'looking after' elderly servants in a form of gift exchange for their labour in her service.

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<sup>1316</sup> Henry Darbshire, 'Holly Village' in *Villa and Cottage Architecture: Select Examples of County and Suburban Residences Recently Erected with a Full Description of Each Building* (London: Blackie & Son, ), p. 9.

<sup>1317</sup> Darbshire, 'Holly Village', p. 9.

<sup>1318</sup> *Christian Times* (Friday, 22 November 1867), Heal Archive.

<sup>1319</sup> The 1871 National Census return for Highgate, Middlesex.

<sup>1320</sup> Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett Coutts', p. 356.

Located on the southern end of the grounds, just off Swains Lane, the village was constructed in 1865 and consisted of three double cottages, two single ones and two that were designed to accommodate lodgers: 'who require good, and at the same time retired apartments, and whose wants can be attended to by the family who let the rooms, without interfering with the privacy of either'.<sup>1321</sup> In addition to this the gateway comprised two houses, making altogether twelve separate dwellings.<sup>1322</sup> In his article on Holly Village, Darbishire described one of the family houses, which was designed to also accommodate a lodger.<sup>1323</sup> The family house on the ground floor contained a parlour, kitchen, wash house or scullery, and a pantry besides a boiler in the scullery and a water closet, entered from the lobby. The upper floor contained three 'good bed-rooms', the doors to which are all 'well contrived to prevent draughts and screen the position of the beds'. Burdett Coutts stamped her possession of the village with the diamond shaped Coutts coat of arms prominently carved on each building and over the entrance archway the inscription 'Holly Village. Erected by A.G.B. Coutts A.D. 1865'. On either side of the archway are classically robed figures of Burdett Coutts and Hannah Brown, holding a dog and a dove respectively (fig. 90) as further evidence of possession, clearly visible to anyone entering the enclave. Both exterior and interior were constructed in the Domestic English Gothic style. Darbishire's plans reveal that the bedrooms measured 12 x 11', 13 x 12 and 12 x 10'9. <sup>1324</sup> The ground floor rooms were 12 x 10'9 (parlour), 10'6 x 9 (kitchen), and 11 x 8'6 (lodger's bedroom). They incorporated innovatory elements such as dust shoots that lead from a small trap door in one of the reception rooms to a brick enclosure in the cellar – the same device used by Darbishire in his Peabody developments.<sup>1325</sup> Darbishire noted, perhaps with some puzzlement, that 'the whole of the work is executed with an amount of care and finish such as is seldom bestowed on buildings of a much more pretentious description'.<sup>1326</sup> This is

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<sup>1321</sup> Darbishire, 'Holly Village', p. 8

<sup>1322</sup> Darbishire, 'Holly Village', p. 9.

<sup>1323</sup> Darbishire, 'Holly Village', p. 9.

<sup>1324</sup> Darbishire, 'Holly Village', p. 10.

<sup>1325</sup> Tarn, 'The Peabody Donation Fund', p. 13.

<sup>1326</sup> Darbishire, 'Holly Village', p. 10.

reflected in the choice of craftsmen. Thomas Cubitt of Gray's Inn Road was employed, using Italian craftsmen for the woodwork (fig. 91). Cubitt was one of the best well-known and most successful builders and developers of the nineteenth century being responsible for the development of large areas of London, particularly Pimlico and Belgravia. The firm had a high reputation and employed highly skilled tradesmen at their large building works south of the Thames. The brickwork was constructed using 'paviours, superior to the usual stocks, richer and of a more uniform colour (fig. 92). White Huntingdon bricks were used for the ornamental facework, being more durable than paviours.<sup>1327</sup> All the corners of the walls, door and window jambs splayed or 'enriched' with a quoin Bead which softens and gives a general richness and refinement to the outlines at a 'trifling expense'. He used Portland stone for the window sills detached shafts, moulded parts of chimney bands and other situations 'where brick is not desirable'.<sup>1328</sup> The external woodwork is Mountain Teak; all the internal woodwork best Baltic timber. Darbshire explained that this was chosen in preference to oak 'on account of its fine colour, durability and non-liability to warp and split'.<sup>1329</sup> The slates were Cumberland slate 'of a delicate green colour' rather than the more common grey slate and the ornamental bands and figures were executed in a darker shade.<sup>1330</sup> The ornamental ridges were of Staffordshire blue tiles. In addition, all hips and valleys are covered with six pounds of lead and the eave-gutters and rain-water pipes are of cast-iron. The windows were casements of heavy crown-glass: 'secured by a purposely designed fasteners, which serves as a stay bar when the windows are open and secures them effectively when they are shut'.<sup>1331</sup> The use of brick had increased since the repeal of the Brick Tax in 1850. It was perceived as an 'honest' material as opposed to stucco which served to hide the construction beneath.<sup>1332</sup> A preference for decorative brickwork also

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<sup>1327</sup> Darbshire, 'Holly Village', p. 10.

<sup>1328</sup> Darbshire, 'Holly Village', p. 10.

<sup>1329</sup> Darbshire, 'Holly Village', p. 10.

<sup>1330</sup> Darbshire, 'Holly Village', p. 11.

<sup>1331</sup> Darbshire, 'Holly Village', p. 11.

<sup>1332</sup> Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, p. 12.

developed in the 1850s and 1860s inspired by medieval Italy and France and espoused by Ruskin in *The Stones in Venice* (1853). Polychromy, popularized by William Butterfield, was often used as a decorative feature. The *Stones of Venice* also popularised the carving of foliage in stone, a practice that was widely adopted during the last quarter of the century even on modest terraced houses. Its use coincided with improved costs of quarrying and transport so that stone became mass-produced and more widely available along with artificial stone.<sup>1333</sup> Pugin had advocated steep roofs surmounted by cresting, finials, weathervane and stair case towers, and varying forms of windows in one building.<sup>1334</sup> In the case of Holly Village there are both casements and oriel windows, the later originating as medieval places of prayer (fig.93). The wood at Holly Village is stained, not painted, in line with Gothic Revival theory. The houses have porches and the doors are arched and display quatrefoil patterns. At the side are stone pillars decorated with carved foliage, to the top and sides are wooden finials. The organic nature of gothic and its variations may well have appealed to Burdett Coutts and it likely that her control over the design process was considerable, given the control she maintained in St Stephen's Church. The houses are almost text-book examples of gothic architecture displaying the verticality and attention to detail that Pugin had advocated, that is, that all parts of a house should express their function and not be concealed under one monotonous front but exhibiting a variety of forms. It has already been noted how important decoration was to Burdett Coutts, and the opportunity to exercise her taste freely on her own estate on a domestic scale was obviously an exciting one.

Gradually the estate was encroached upon, with numbers 5-57 Croftdown Road being built by the end of the twentieth century.<sup>1335</sup> Ashmead does not appear to have had much of an attachment to Holly Lodge or perhaps he needed the money for the Stud he operated for

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<sup>1333</sup> Linda Osborne, *Victorian Gothic House Style* (London: David and Charles, 2000), p. 23.

<sup>1334</sup> Osborne, *Victorian Gothic*, p. 25.

<sup>1335</sup> Richardson, *Highgate*, p. 63.

he put the entire estate up for sale in 1907.<sup>1336</sup> However, the estate failed to meet its reserve of £260,000 and was withdrawn. Following on from Ashmead's death in 1921 the entire estate was again put up for sale but in lots. Holly Village was purchased by its tenants for five thousand pounds in 1922 and the freeholds sold separately that same year.<sup>1337</sup> The Lodge, which had been used as a soldier's hospital in the First World War and been damaged in an air raid in 1917, was demolished in 1923, the remaining fifty five acres were subsequently sold later that year.<sup>1338</sup>

In an article for *Country Life* in 1958, Christopher McIntosh described the interiors of the houses as being probably rather uncomfortable, the original placing of the doors as often cramped and the rooms 'small and dim with disproportionately high ceilings'.<sup>1339</sup> The measurements of the rooms are not especially small however, and certainly compare favourably with many homes built today. It is the only one of Angela Burdett Coutts's housing schemes still extant. In its design, it was unfettered by cost restraints, and she was able to allow the architect full reign in the gothic style albeit on a much reduced domestic scale than her ambitious commercial project, Columbia Market.

## Columbia Market

Columbia Market was begun in 1862 and opened in spring 1869 and it was to be Burdett Coutts's most ambitious and most spectacularly unsuccessful undertaking. The primary object of the market was to supply the surrounding poor with wholesome food at a fair rate i.e. to cut out the 'middleman' whose inclusion led to higher prices.<sup>1340</sup> Burdett Coutts also

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<sup>1336</sup> Richardson, *Highgate*, p. 64.

<sup>1337</sup> Richardson, *Highgate*, p. 64.

<sup>1338</sup> London Garden Suburbs Ltd subsequently purchased the estate and it was developed for housing. The Holly Lodge Estate Committee and Edna Healey, *Holly Lodge Estate* (London: 1993), p. 4.

<sup>1339</sup> McIntosh 'Victorian Fantasy in Highgate', p. 150.

<sup>1340</sup> Rose, *The East End*, p. 258.

hoped to bring products and consumer closer together and promote habits of 'thrift and industry' amongst the traders.<sup>1341</sup> It was intended that the farmers of Kent and Essex would bring their produce to the market and sell directly to the public. With this in mind Burdett Coutts was in the fortunate position of being able to obtain an Act of Parliament giving powers to construct a tramway connection with the Great Eastern Railway, although in the event this was never built.<sup>1342</sup> To achieve these ends the building would have the advantage of being free of tolls and the high rents demanded at existing covered markets. Burdett Coutts also hoped that the costermongers would be attracted to the market and thus drawn away from the streets, especially since new police regulations threatened to drive them away completely.<sup>1343</sup>

In this ambitious project Burdett Coutts was participating in the refashioning of London which reached its apogee during the middle years of the nineteenth century. As has been already observed, there was a widespread concern with the poverty and congested streets of London. The journalist and historian George Augustus Sala blamed the rotting buildings and disease-ridden streets on outmoded self-interested property rights and this view became increasingly popular in the early 1850s.<sup>1344</sup> The lack of a centralised body to govern the city led to a lack of overall cohesion in attempts to provide sanitation and infrastructure. The situation came to a head in 1854 after yet another severe outbreak of cholera led to a review of the management of London's water supply.<sup>1345</sup> In the meantime railways were being constructed through the city, tearing through the London slums and whole areas were being

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<sup>1341</sup> Mark Girouard, 'A Victorian Oddity in Danger: The Columbia Market, Bethnal Green', *Country Life* (17 April 1958).

<sup>1342</sup> *The Builder* (13 March 1875), p. 239.

<sup>1343</sup> Costermongers were generally regarded as an unwelcome group whose lack of regular work led to dissolute habits and rowdiness, Burdett Coutts was unusual in positively welcoming them.

<sup>1344</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>1345</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 19.

refashioned with large thoroughfares.<sup>1346</sup> It has been said that for much of the 1860s half of London was being rebuilt or succumbing to the forces of improvement, a vast building site.<sup>1347</sup> Dana Arnold has argued that in its reconstruction of the urban space landowners were continuing to use land as a commodity to be 'reshaped and expropriated for efficiency and profit' in the same way as estate owners had redesigned and rebuilt land on their rural estates.<sup>1348</sup> Burdett Coutts contributed to this refashioning of the city in her efforts to erect a large market and infrastructure to refashion a large area of Bethnal Green and transform the spending and buying habits of the local population and render them more 'manageable' and ordered.

The nineteenth century saw a proliferation of public market spaces, a civic response to the growth in population which rendered the existing food distribution system inadequate to the demands placed upon it.<sup>1349</sup> Burdett Coutts's new market was a private concern, as were many of the old existing markets. In this Burdett Coutts was going against the trend; the new markets were increasingly being built and managed by local government.<sup>1350</sup> The old markets were street markets; by the eighteenth century the market hall, a new building type, had appeared in Leeds and Liverpool but London had no corresponding retail market halls.<sup>1351</sup> Whilst the new markets were a response to new demands on food supply, they were also an attempt to better control public buying and selling on the streets by enclosing market activities under one roof and thus rendering it more liable to control.<sup>1352</sup> It was perceived that traditional markets in their openness, the haggling, noise and congestion had often been the focus of popular unrest, especially in times of food shortage such as the

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<sup>1346</sup> Dana Arnold, *London Landscapes in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>1347</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 29.

<sup>1348</sup> Arnold, *London Landscapes*, p. 23.

<sup>1349</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. x.

<sup>1350</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. x.

<sup>1351</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. xi.

<sup>1352</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. x.



early 1830s and 'hungry 40's' when full-scale riots had broken out.<sup>1353</sup> A centralised building would separate the culture of the street from the serious business going on inside and make it easier to enforce public order.<sup>1354</sup>

The retail market hall was primarily a provincial phenomenon. They came to symbolise town freedom and civic responsibility in the same way as the town hall and church, they were also a lucrative source of income in the form of rents and market tolls.<sup>1355</sup> A new architecture also sprang up; in the early years market halls were usually classical in design, but the middle of the nineteenth century the Italian renaissance was becoming the prime inspiration.<sup>1356</sup> Both styles were excellent communicators of new public values of honesty and order, being large and imposing yet also simple.<sup>1357</sup> Surprisingly the Crystal Palace had comparatively little architectural influence on market architecture, it was felt that the extensive use of glass did not convey the powerful and serious message of business, of buying and selling and honesty inherent in traditionally 'solid' classical revival and renaissance styles.<sup>1358</sup>

We do not mean to say we can get the picturesque effects of the old markets of Shrewsbury, Salisbury, Peterborough, Leominster, Hereford, and other old towns but we can do something to make them somewhat different from huge railway sheds and Crystal Palaces. <sup>1359</sup>

Although Gothic was sometimes used as an expensive and elaborate style, it was rejected in

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<sup>1353</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, pp. 11, 124.

<sup>1354</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 35.

<sup>1355</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 47.

<sup>1356</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 47.

<sup>1357</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 84.

<sup>1358</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 83.

<sup>1359</sup> *Birmingham News* 1878 quoted in Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 48. Joseph Paxton utilised glass and iron in his market hall design for Leeds but this was demolished in 1896 as not being 'picturesque' enough, Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 51.

both Wigan and Darwin, both predominately working-class towns, as inappropriate to exemplify the towns' character, although it was adopted in Wokenham in 1860 for a project with a market arcade on the ground floor of a Gothic revival town hall and for a new market in Newark in 1883.<sup>1360</sup> These examples are drawn from the provinces, there was certainly nothing like the proposed market in London. Cost restraints were not a factor for Burdett Coutts, nor were there site restrictions which often limited design. Again, she chose Henry Darbishire as architect and was unafraid to chose gothic architecture in defiance of the classical trend. The design consisted of a large enclosed quadrangle, a vast arched gate on one side opposite a huge market hall with an arcade cloister surrounding a wide central space (fig.94).<sup>1361</sup>

The opening decades of the nineteenth century had seen a huge increase in the building of arcades across Europe.<sup>1362</sup> Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), explored the phenomenon of the Parisian arcade in his unfinished *Arcades Project*, in which he analysed these new worlds of luxury wherein for the first time the customer could find everything they might possibly need under one roof.<sup>1363</sup> They were seen as modern devices, interiorised streets which facilitated movement and provided shelter whilst people shopped and provided an order to consumer activity which the old outdoor markets lacked.<sup>1364</sup> In Columbia Market, in addition to the arcades there was room for the traditional forms of market device, the stall, which could be set up under cover in galleries and the barrow. It was calculated that there was room for four hundred open air stalls and a hire service for barrows was envisaged.<sup>1365</sup> As in her other projects Burdett Coutts ensured that only the best materials were used,

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<sup>1360</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 92.

<sup>1361</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 207.

<sup>1362</sup> For discussion of the use of arcades see Dana Arnold, 'Panoptic Visions of London: Possessing the Metropolis' in *Art History*, vol. 32, Issue 2 (2009), pp. 228-332.

<sup>1363</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, 1927-40 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>1364</sup> Arnold, 'Panoptic Visions', p. 335.

<sup>1365</sup> Girouard, 'A Victorian Oddity', p. 9.

granite for much of the ornamental work and teak for the roofing and external woodwork. A great clock, a standard feature of new market halls, stood in the centre of the square, and also contained machinery for the water supply. As with Columbia Square, the basic materials were again grayish-yellow and gray-blue bricks but the embellishments and decoration was on a much higher level. Along with white stone carved into cusps and corbels with the heads of saints and medieval figures, ridge tiles, spirelets and weathercocks abounded. The hall pillars were two feet thick and thirty five foot high and in the arcades foliage and other details were moulded in terracotta. Around the courtyard texts carved in gothic script admonished the traders 'Be Sober, Be Pitiful, Be Vigilant, Be Courteous', 'Study to be Quiet and do your own Business' (fig.95) carved in Gothic script. It opened to tremendous enthusiasm on 29 April 1869. Bands played, hymns were sung and volunteer troops marched in the streets, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke and Burdett Coutts was presented with feather-flowers.<sup>1366</sup> However not all shared the enthusiasm:

If the delicately carved pillars of Columbia Market representing as they do a philanthropy much more profitable to great architects and builders than the hungry of Bethnal whose emptiness they with great glee seem to mock... were the only monuments to the charity of the dear Lady Coutts, *The Hornet* would rage and beat his head, and revile the beards of his ancestors.<sup>1367</sup>

As has previously discussed, Burdett Coutts was liable to be viewed somewhat cynically by some observers of her largesse. *The Hornet* was, as the name might imply, a weekly satirical newspaper and appears to have had a rather cynical view generally of Burdett Coutts's largesse as indicated by the cartoon of 7 July 1872 (fig.96). This depicts Burdett Coutts solemnly throwing large amounts of money around herself. *The Hornet* clearly thought her actions in this instance extravagant and ill-thought out and unlikely to be of any real benefit to the poor.

Unfortunately this proved to be the case; the market was a costly failure. Other markets had failed through design faults; they might have been too small and the aisles too narrow,

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<sup>1366</sup> Girouard, 'A Victorian Oddity', p. 8.

<sup>1367</sup> *The Hornet* (May 1869), Heal Archive A IV/107.Camden, Local History and Archive Library. *The Hornet* was incorporated into the *Home Journal* in 1873.

'draughty' (Henley) and 'badly built' (Newark) or the rents too costly. Ease of movement was important and visibility of the entrances from the street to rent.<sup>1368</sup> The reasons for the failure of Columbia were not so straightforward. As indicated, it could be that the scale and magnificence of the building was too imposing for the average coster to feel comfortable with, resembling as it did a vast cathedral (maybe these connotations were also too much to bear (fig. 97). Another reason may have been the censorious texts which were unlikely to be welcomed by people who too often could barely read straightforward English or resented being preached at. Other restrictions may also have played a part. They included a ban on Sunday trading (except for milk at certain times), a day traditionally used for shopping in the East End, and heavy fines were imposed on swearing. As with Burdett Coutts's social housing, these strictures reveal a basic lack of understanding of the East End trader and his customer but were not unique to this market hall. An attempt to control behaviour was typical of new market projects; Salisbury's by laws forbade swearing, noise disturbance, offensive language, indecent or vulgar behaviour and smoking. In the Dundee Market House 'rude language' was forbidden and persons under the influence of alcohol were not allowed to enter the market.<sup>1369</sup> However, it should be allowed that Burdett Coutts was realistic in her assessments of the traders in that a public house, *The Market*, was also constructed in one corner of the market and that at least was apparently very popular.<sup>1370</sup> The biggest blow for Columbia Market however, was the unwillingness of the street traders to leave the streets. They were nearer the main centres of population where they were, and also closer to the existing markets whose dealers also acted to defend themselves against its threat. Six months after opening the market was forced to close.<sup>1371</sup> All attempts to continue the market in various guises failed. In 1870 it was re-opened as a fish market, and to ensure the fish came to Columbia rather than Billingsgate, Burdett Coutts subsidized the fisherman, tried to encourage dealers with nominal rents and even paid them salaries; but

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<sup>1368</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, pp. 105-110.

<sup>1369</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 147.

<sup>1370</sup> Rose, *The East End*, p. 258.

<sup>1371</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 210.

Billingsgate dealers put up a considerable fight and she was defeated.<sup>1372</sup> In 1871 Burdett Coutts offered it to the City of London Corporation.<sup>1373</sup> Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of the Corporation it was unable to make the market work profitably and they returned it to her in 1875. In 1881 *The Times* revealed that it was to be converted for cigar and tobacco manufacture 'the object being to afford employment for female labour on a large scale in the East End of London' in conjunction with some Liverpool tobacco firms.<sup>1374</sup> There is no record of whether this actually took place, certainly it could not have been a success for the market finally closed in 1885. In 1915 it was acquired by the London County Council who used it for stores and offices before it was finally demolished in the 1960s despite some protest in architectural circles. On the whole though there was little real sympathy for the building, described by Sir John Summerson as an: 'extraordinary white elephant...to preserve it would be quixotic - an encumbrance and a waste. Moreover, as a preserved

monument the pathos would vanish and we should become conscious only of the rather indifferent technical powers of its architect'.<sup>1375</sup>

It is worth comparing Columbia Market with the other large London market construction project of the 1860s, Smithfield Market (fig. 98). Covering a similarly large site of three and a half acres Smithfield was the work of the City Corporation's own architect, Horace Jones. The first of several notable Victorian buildings he designed, Smithfield was opened in 1868.<sup>1376</sup> Although Italianate in appearance its main inspiration was the Crystal Palace and in this instance it was a success. It incorporated iron, stone and glass to give an overall impression of light with Portland stone pilasters supporting round arches with richly carved keystones. The recesses are filled with red brickwork and grillwork that is elegantly coiled

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<sup>1372</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 210.

<sup>1373</sup> Orton, *Made of Gold*, p. 210.

<sup>1374</sup> *The Times* (5 January 1881).

<sup>1375</sup> Sir John Summerson, *The Preservation of Georgian and Victorian Architecture*, Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, 31 March 1958. Millicent Rose implies that it was also used as a bomb shelter during the Second World War, with unspecified tragic results, Rose, *The East End*, p. 258.

<sup>1376</sup> Jones went on to design Billingsgate Fish Market, Leadenhall Market, the City of London School and inspired the construction of Tower Bridge.

and twisted. At the four corners are octagonal pavilion towers, each with a dome and supporting carved stone griffins holding the coat of arms of the City of London. At the four entrances stand huge statues representing the cities of London, Edinburgh, Dublin and Liverpool with bronze dragons gazing down. There is a great deal of rich detail throughout the building, just as in Columbia Market. Access was via two sets of intricate iron gates each 25' high and 19' wide weighing fifteen tons. The use of open ironwork let in light and air while the louvred roof kept out the sun whilst providing superb ventilation. It was an instant success. So successful was it that it is still in use today, having also benefited from a refurbishment costing over seventy million pounds in 1996.<sup>1377</sup>

The Market had incorporated lodgings for city clerks and these were a success however. Burdett Coutts had been content to receive a return of two and a half per cent, much less than other philanthropic societies were prepared to accept - philanthropy plus five per cent was the slogan.<sup>1378</sup> In Millicent Rose's *The East End of London* written in the years immediately following the Second World War, many nineteenth-century model dwellings were still in use.<sup>1379</sup> Rose compared the cramped and mean construction of the Waterlow buildings with Columbia Square.<sup>1380</sup> The Waterlow Buildings were 'deeply depressing', with stairs and landings of 'wretched proportions,' each unit was designed to be multiplied at will and the windows were so arranged that they gave out only minimum light. The ironwork in balconies and window brackets was skimpy and the stairs distempered in salmon-pink with a 'blood-red dado rail', the 'nadir of urban living', 'worse than lowest cottages' but yielding seven per cent profit.<sup>1381</sup> Introduced in Finsbury in the 1860s they were copied with minor amendments all over London. Rose says that flat dwelling had little appeal for the traditional East Ender whose hobbies such as pigeon fancying and gardening were not

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<sup>1377</sup> *The Times* (3 December 2002), p. 3.

<sup>1378</sup> Tarn, *Five Per Cent Philanthropy*, p. 30.

<sup>1379</sup> One block of Columbia Square was destroyed by a bomb during the Second World War, the other during the 1960s.

<sup>1380</sup> Rose, *The East End*, p. 62.

<sup>1381</sup> Rose, *The East End*, p. 262.

suited to it.<sup>1382</sup> In his study of Rothschild Buildings, Jerry White concurs with this view, adding that tenement dwellings were often known by East Enders as 'barracks', and for many in the East End a house, no matter how dilapidated, was always better than incurring the 'stigma' of living in a flat.<sup>1383</sup>

In Burdett Coutt's housing and market schemes she was trying to impose order on the anarchy of working class life, moving them into a more controlled environment, hoping that this order would improve the behaviour of the inhabitants and reduce the dangers of social unrest. The architecture would help to frame the conduct of the people, raising their conduct to mirror the order and, in the case of the market, the beauty of the buildings. It protected women and children from the often offensive nature of street life and, it was hoped, could help to promote prudence.<sup>1384</sup> In the East End equivalent of Regent's Park, Victoria Park, Burdett Coutts also paid seven thousand pounds for a drinking fountain, again designed by Darbishire in a combination of gothic and Italianate styles (fig. 99), which was raised on several steps, ornate and highly visible, very much a landmark than a utilitarian drinking fountain.<sup>1385</sup> These were Burdett Coutts's private contributions to a large-scale project to provide drinking fountains throughout the capital undertaken by the Board of Works and local authorities at this time.<sup>1386</sup>

Between 1862 and 1870 at least a quarter of a million pounds passed through Henry Darbishire's hands as the designer of all Angela Burdett Coutts' building projects.<sup>1387</sup> Such initiatives would have also brought her name to public attention on a much more accessible level in a location used for leisure by everyone in the area. Arguably she was

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<sup>1382</sup> Rose, *The East End*, p. 262.

<sup>1383</sup> White, *Rothschild Buildings*, p. 30.

<sup>1384</sup> Schmiechen and Garb, *The British Market Hall*, p. 55.

<sup>1385</sup> Burdett Coutts also built a much smaller and less imposing drinking fountain, since demolished, in Regent's Park, again by Darbishire, at the entrance to the Zoo.

<sup>1386</sup> Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, p. 23.

<sup>1387</sup> Healey, *Lady Unknown*, p. 164.

stamping her identity on this part of the East End of London; she was already known as 'the Queen of the Poor' and these initiatives might be seen as a consolidation of her empire. These efforts can also be seen as activities within 'acceptable' extensions of the female domestic sphere - church, housing and as a supplier of food for the 'family' even as she operated in a position of dominance as client and on a scale far greater than any of her contemporaries. She can also be seen as taking part in an activity which Dana Arnold sees as an effort to 'miniaturise the metropolis', or make it knowable and possessable, in fact to render it 'cultural capital'.<sup>1388</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In 1986 a review of the Healey biography *Lady Unknown* asked the question 'are modern readers ready for a biography of a figure whose main character traits were modesty and agreeableness, whom contemporaries agree was "angelic" and who almost certainly was the model for Agnes in *David Copperfield*'? <sup>1389</sup> It concluded that this was more a problem for our times than hers. In the twenty five years since that review was published this is still a pertinent question. Burdett Coutts is still a largely forgotten figure. Although a reading of

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<sup>1388</sup> Arnold, 'Panoptic Visions', p. 333.

<sup>1389</sup> Hutchinson Crocker 'Review of *Lady Unknown*,' pp. 517-518.



Healey's biography may have given the impression that Burdett Coutts was almost the epitome of the ideal of Victorian womanhood, she was by no means 'angelic' nor always very agreeable. She was a formidable, strong-minded woman who was very conscious of her place and status in society and determined to have her own way. In this thesis I have tried to show how Burdett Coutts used the limited outlets open to her as a Victorian woman to assert her control and to fashion an identity for herself amongst the elite of Victorian society, primarily through her patronage of philanthropic building developments and in her art collection. Of course, individuals have more than one 'identity' that they may wish to project, depending on the audience or circumstances, and while aware of this, the little evidence we have of Burdett Coutts's first person narrative and the written sources available to us has led to me focussing primarily on Burdett Coutts's projection of herself as a member of the aristocratic elite, using her art collection, philanthropic work and additional signifiers such as dress to reinforce a class hierarchy and projection of herself within the elite establishment.

This thesis has focussed on individual biography in order to interrogate the complex practice of collecting, self-fashioning and the performance of identity. The research has emphasised the crucial role her art collection and architecture played in fashioning a specific sense of self; in this case, that of a member of the aristocracy, and how display and exchange rendered these objects meaningful. I have also explored how the two facets of Burdett Coutts's background, her aristocratic paternity coupled with the bourgeois nouveau riche background of her mother, were reflected in her art collection; the aristocratic collection of Old Masters displayed in prestigious spaces for public consumption and the more bourgeois contemporary art in her more private residence. I have examined how, operating within an increasingly commodified society, Burdett Coutts seems to have successfully negotiated her way around the Victorian art world, buying with confidence in the various arenas of artistic commerce. Her lifetime of collecting brought art into her ownership in a number of long established ways - inheritance, private sale, commission, dealer and auction - and I have suggested that as her collection and confidence grew Burdett Coutts's reliance on the controversial role of the dealer diminished as she preferred to use her own agents who would act under instruction and upon whom she could rely. I have suggested that her use of the spectacle of public auction to buy works by neglected

artists, particularly Old Masters traditionally associated with aristocratic collecting practices, reflected her confidence as a buyer and a wish to project an image of herself as a member of the aristocratic elite. I have also considered that her purchase at public auction also reflected a need for the security offered by the commercial market and a concern with provenance. This study has also examined Burdett Coutts within the context of acquisition and possession in the case of Faed and copyright issues when she asserted her rights of possession at a time when replication of images was commonplace.

The thesis has also looked at Burdett Coutts as 'other' in the art world who for reasons of gender could not participate in the male network of gentlemen's clubs or smoking rooms where news of activities and developments in the art world could be easily shared, and considered how the male signifiers of the connoisseur led to her eventually being perceived as a mere accumulator rather than a serious collector. Walter Benjamin argued that a collector recognized the emotional, historical and political motives in the private act of collecting and ultimately invested the collected item with a value quite apart from the exchange or use value system of others.<sup>1390</sup> Much of Burdett Coutts's collecting practice would seem to reflect this. The personal nature of the collection was such that not only are many of her pictures reflections of her family and their associations, souvenirs of people and places but symbols of reassurance for her of her place in society. They reinforce her place as a member of an elite, with patriotic, literary and artistic connections. It is significant that unlike many collectors she did not sell any of the objects in her collection; but clearly she invested the objects with emotional significance. Arguably in her collecting practice she personified, as Jean Baudrillard put it in *Le Systeme des Objets* (1968), the miracle of collecting in that 'what you really collect is always yourself', for all the objects she collected were not part of one cohesive collection but part of several disparate collections which reflected different aspects of Burdett Coutts's family, life and concerns.<sup>1391</sup> This thesis has argued that the very strong manifestation of this aspect of collecting practice in Burdett Coutts's collection has also contributed to her dismissal as a serious collector.

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<sup>1390</sup> Walter Benjamin, 1931, unreferenced, cited in Bill Brown, 'The Collecting Mania', *University of Chicago Magazine*, Volume 94, No 1 (October, 2001) [Chicago-magazine@uchicago.edu](mailto:Chicago-magazine@uchicago.edu) accessed 6 December 2009.

<sup>1391</sup> Baudrillard, *Le Systeme des Objets*, p. 104.

I have also examined Burdett Coutts's philanthropic patronage as yet another means of self-fashioning of identity, using architecture as a means of perpetuating her name and as an instrument of exercising social control. In a variety of projects from Urania Cottage, her home for 'fallen women', to her educational activities, church, social housing, market and infrastructure projects, she was not only participating in philanthropic schemes for the welfare of the poor, though this should not be underestimated, but also participating in philanthropic activities which aimed at social redevelopment and re-fashioning of both people and large parts of the city. With her vast financial resources Burdett Coutts was in the rare position for a woman of stamping her name and authority on these schemes and I have also considered how gender may also have acted as a barrier in her dealings with masculine agents of the professional world such as architects where she would have been perceived as stepping out of a traditional subservient role within a domestic sphere into a more visible position of power as a patron of architectural projects.

This thesis has also examined the possible reasons for the lack of recognition of Burdett Coutts in her pioneering housing work and concluded that in comparison with others such as Octavia Hill her lack of specialisation combined with her ability to delegate to agents, and thus her lack of personal contact with her tenants were significant factors but that it was primarily the issue of her wealth which has proved too problematic.

During her long lifetime Burdett Coutts was, as a result of both her wealth, class and philanthropy, constantly in the public eye. As has been noted, her attendance at social events, the opening of various philanthropic ventures and the receipt of honours meant that she received press attention throughout her life both in Britain and abroad. In general this was sympathetic but when she, like other notable women of the period, was involved in an action outside the conventions of the respectable Victorian lady she risked bringing odium down on her head. Indeed, the scandal of her marriage to a much younger man left her open to an hostility which recalls something of that meted out to her step-grandmother. That she was able to weather this storm was undoubtedly due to the long years of public acts of philanthropy and 'respectability'. Only occasionally can we detect that not everyone viewed her with unalloyed reverence. *The Hornet's* cynical view has already

been noted, but in 1866 two of her pictures, *Christ Blessing Little Children* and a nude study, were cut and a marble statue defaced at 1 Stratton Street by a workman employed by Banting.<sup>1392</sup> While his motives were unknown and his mental state unclear, it is possible that this was a personal attack directed at Burdett Coutts herself. More significantly however, during a large demonstration by the unemployed in February 1886, Burdett Coutts's house in Piccadilly was attacked with stones, along with many others in that area, by hostile elements in the crowd, many of whom had marched in to central London from the East End.<sup>1393</sup> It was noted by *The Times* that the identity of the house's owner would have been well known but it did not spare her the hostility of the crowd.<sup>1394</sup> It is tempting to see the fact that she was included in the anger directed at the houses and property in this wealthy part of London as a reflection of resentment directed not just at Burdett Coutts as a member of this elite but also as the personification of public philanthropy and at all those who interfered in the lives

of the poor and sought to control and 'elevate' them with scant regard for their actual wishes.

As has been noted, Burdett Coutts was innately conservative, she had no desire for huge change in society and it is difficult to discard the 'Lady Bountiful' image of the Victorian philanthropist and Burdett Coutts's membership of a wealthy aristocratic elite. Class issues were demonstrated in reviews of both the Healey and Orton biographies and it is ironic that Healey, a socialist, was able to overlook the class prejudice which proved too difficult for some reviewers. Ultimately Burdett Coutts was a wealthy independent woman who was not afraid to exercise power and control and fashion an elite identity through her philanthropic and artistic patronage at a time when women were not expected to draw public attention to themselves, nor be seen to exert their control. In this exercise of her wealth and power she was, and for many, still remains today, problematic.

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<sup>1392</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* (20 October 1866).

<sup>1393</sup> *The Times* (9 February 1886).

<sup>1394</sup> *The Times* (9 February 1886).

